THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN THE THOUGHT OF F. R. TENNANT

Charles G. Werner

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Preface

This thesis is an attempt to provide an exposition of F. R. Tennant's thought on the problem of evil. This problem is always a pressing one for Christian theology, and it is felt that it will be of some value from both the practical and theoretical standpoints to have brought together all of his work in this field, including his thought on the related questions of the nature and origin of sin, inasmuch as Dr. Tennant has made a first-rate contribution to the philosophy of religion, and in particular has not only provided an outstanding treatment of the problem of evil itself, but has been chiefly responsible for an important new view of sin. John Oman, for example, in his review of Philosophical Theology, referred to Tennant's work on the problem of evil as "certainly of very exceptional wisdom and power". For these reasons, then, it is hoped that this thesis will be of some value to the various purposes of Christian thought.

The general plan is that of first setting forth an exposition of his thought, unalloyed by any attempts at criticism, and then to add under separate chapters some consideration as to the extent of its validity and satisfactoriness. The principal chapter is the third, which is an exposition of his theodicy. It is preceded by a

first chapter which is of an introductory nature and sets forth his philosophical theology in general, and a second chapter which is an exposition of his views on the nature of sin. The concluding fourth and fifth chapters are of a critical type, and deal successively with his views on sin and on evil.

Though Tennant's theodicy is the principal subject of this thesis, it will readily be seen that it has been necessary to deal to an even greater length with his treatment of sin, not only because the problem of sinfulness stands in close relationship to theodicy, but also because the volume of his writings has been greater in this regard than in the case of his work on the theodicy itself.

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Professors John Baillie and W. S. Tindal, for their valuable suggestions, which, I hope, have been adequately put to use in this thesis.

The spelling followed throughout is that approved in "The Little Oxford Dictionary of Current English", 3rd. edition.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Biography

Frederick Robert Tennant was born in 1866 at Burslem, Staffs, and received his early education at Newcastle-under-Lyme. As an undergraduate at Caius College, Cambridge (1885-1889) he worked chiefly in physics, mathematics, biology, and chemistry, and in Part II of the Natural Science Tripos his principal study was chemistry.

He continued his scientific work, and began a study of theology, while employed as Senior Science Master at his old school (1891-1894), taking his B.Sc. at the University of London and his M.A. at Cambridge the following year. He then served as Curate of St. Matthews, Walsall (1894-1897), following which he again took up residence at Cambridge, first as Chaplain of Caius College, then as Curate of St. Mary the Great, and began his study of philosophy under James Ward. While holding a college studentship (1899-1902) he wrote The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin, and was during the same period Hulsean Lecturer (The Origin and Propagation of Sin).

From 1903-1913 he was Rector of Hockwold. Cambridge awarded him a B.D. in 1904, a D.D. in 1906, and called him to be University Lecturer in the Philosophy of Religion in 1907. From 1913 until his retirement in 1938 he was Lecturer in Theology at Trinity College. He has also been a

Fellow of the British Academy, was given an honorary D.D. by Oxford, and delivered the Tarner Lectures in 1931 (Philosophy of the Sciences).

Orientation

Tennant's method is that of empiricism. He acknowledges that the validity of his system depends upon an acceptance of the empirical method, and that empiricism is definitely a minority movement in the history of philosophy. Though a priori philosophies are numerous, he employs persistently "the empirical, inductive, and explanatory method, adopted in varying degrees of fragmentariness and completeness by Locke and Butler, Lotze and James Ward",[1] asserting that it has become possible since the advent of a psychology of common experience, to improve upon the Lockean empiricism which had led to an impasse.

The greatest single influence upon his thought was James Ward, affirmations of indebtedness to him abounding throughout his works. Especially in psychological matters was Tennant influenced by Ward, and in this respect also by G. F. Stout. He alludes to Stout's distinction between 'psychic' and 'psychological' immediacy as becoming one of his "most powerful philosophical searchlights".[2] He frequently speaks highly of Kant and McTaggart, and though he

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[1] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 247.

[2] The Journal of Theological Studies, XXXIV, p. 96.

was not able to rest content with Kant's 'half-hearted phenomenalism', and could not accept McTaggart's a priori premises, his admiration for and debt to them is often made obvious. James Martineau and Lotze also figure prominently in the development of certain aspects of his philosophy.

More germane to the subject matter of this thesis are the facts that some of the ethical ideas of Sidgwick and A. E. Taylor are used to support the ethical foundation of his conception of sin, that he explicitly acknowledges that Otto Pfleiderer first advanced some of the ideas connected with his views on sin, and that his theodicy concerning physical evil includes appreciative references to Ward and especially to Martineau.

Tennant's general philosophy

The following pages of this chapter are an attempt to summarize his general philosophy and theology so as to provide a suitable introduction to the specific problem at hand, inasmuch as "the philosophical problem of evil can only be approached after the adoption of a definite ontology and doctrine of God."[1] This summarization is made from his two volumes of Philosophical Theology (Vol. I, The Soul and Its Faculties; Vol. II, The World, the Soul, and God), where his empirical theism is extensively set

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[1] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 123n.

forth. Three of his books deal entirely with the subject of this thesis, two more are essentially elaborations of topics whose main ideas are included in his magnum opus,[2] while the last remaining one is not of great importance to either his general philosophy or to this thesis.[3]

This summary exposition will proceed largely according to the plan of development used by Tennant himself, inasmuch as his is a carefully laid edifice, built block on block, and because it will the better serve to throw into sharp relief the empirical method which is his philosophical compass.

The first volume is philosophical, and the second is theological. And in this arrangement may be seen the key to his method, which is that of beginning with the facts of this world and of the nature of man, and of proceeding thereafter to find an explanation of them. This "quest for a philosophy dictated by experience and facts, with indifference to theological issues" (II, 210), is, in its order of inquiry, initially concerned with what is first known by the human mind, not with any supposed metaphysical priorities or "a priori guesses at truth" (II, 165): i.e. the ordo cognoscendi is adopted in preference to the ordo essendi.

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[2] Philosophy of the Sciences, and The Nature of Belief.

[3] Miracle and Its Philosophical Presuppositions. The general conclusion of this study: alleged miracles are of no evidential value inasmuch as the capacities of natural law are not as yet fully known.

Thus Tennant begins with the observable facts of human experience rather than with any preconceived theory of reality, and builds upward from this foundation, letting our "prima facie fact-knowledge" suggest an appropriate interpretation. Some of this 'presumptive knowledge', he recognizes, may upon inspection come to be considered invalid, but that it is nevertheless the only safe point of departure is his firm conviction.

> "If to set out from fact, and to keep in touch with fact, be called empiricism, then, whatever else be found necessary, the empirical method is a sine qua non for knowledge of actuality of any sort" (I, 5).

In setting out from this presumptive knowledge Tennant rejects the epistemological method and all "pre-scientific philosophising" (II, 150) on the ground that it is hazardous to regard thinking and knowing as independent faculties, without first undertaking the harmless inquiry as to how our knowledge came to be, or to assume without investigation that our reason is suited to grasp a supposed rational world, in favour of the method of analytic and genetic psychology. He holds that psychology is "the fundamental science, the first propaedeutic to philosophy" (I, 11).

The first datum of psychology as indicated by Descartes' fundamental certainty is that there is a self-conscious self. Self-consciousness, logically and actually, however, implies consciousness, and it is with this concept that Tennant initiates his philosophical investigation. Consciousness, it is immediately seen, involves

a subject. What the nature of the subject is, is another question, but its existence can scarcely be questioned -- there being no such entity as subjectless experience. To be sure, there are several subjective elements in consciousness, namely, feeling, conation, and attentive activity. Thus Tennant concludes his initial investigation by asserting that

> "our prima facie facts, our data, could not be what they are, unless (1) there is a unique kind of erleben, viz. consciousness, which (2) involves an existent subject that (3) has determinate states and activities" (I, 32).

Tennant continues by recognizing that the primary analytica on the objective side of experience are sense-impressions. These sensa are presented to a mind which receives them and acts upon them in such a way as to give rise to perceptions and thought. Sensa are thrust upon us from the first, and in this very process they amount to being percepts, the results of complex fusions involving subjective activity, rather than pure isolated sensa, else the mind could never advance to richer experience. Though Tennant believes that there is an important measure of truth in Locke's dictum that there is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses, he nevertheless maintains that the mind does not merely passively accept impressions, but contributes something to the organization and correlation of sensa. Thus from the very beginning he sees a common basis for sense and thought, with neither being independent of or reducible to the other.

> "The common root is neither sense nor thought.... It is the actual sensatio...consisting partly of, and being accompanied by, operations that are already vague and implicit or germinal thinking" (I, 40).

This continuity of development of knowledge out of sense is not clearly understood by psychology, but Tennant believes that it must be posited if we are to have a way of accounting for human mentality.

Perceptions are then held to be the mind's constructions out of sensa, before the subject has benefited from communication with others, and between percept and concept he draws no hard and fast line of demarcation. The percept results from both the subjective and objective realms, there occurring from the first a slight degree of unconscious 'interpretation' of the objective. And at the moment of perceiving, we are not conscious of any mental synthetic activities, i.e. it seems that our experience is immediate, "unanalysable and unconditioned by previous experience" (I, 46). Thus Tennant endorses the distinction between 'psychic' and 'psychological', as denoting the difference between experience as it seems to the experient, and as it appears to him or to another upon objective reflection.

Images differ from impressions among other ways in that they are dependent upon previous impressions. They are outgrowths of complicated fusions of impressions. For example,

> "there is nothing in the complex image of a non-actual thing, such as a mermaid, that was not previously 'in the senses'" (I, 52).

Memories are the effects of impressional presentations, and are not identical with them or there would not exist the capriciousness of memory. But that they are to some extent accurate is assumed, in Tennant's system, for he feels that it would otherwise be impossible to account for our accumulation of knowledge.

Tennant states that the level of ideation is now attained, though to be sure, he recognizes something of a crude idea even in the percept. As soon as the mind effects a conscious distinction between existence and essence the level of the abstract has been attained (abstraction occurs when, for example, 'chairs' are thought about without regard to any particular chair). Nevertheless, ideas, though reached by abstraction from particulars, and consequently not actual or real, may still be valid of the perceptual, and herein Tennant effects a distinction between validity and reality (I, 64). And a concept will have to spring from its perceptual framework if it is to be considered as having an actual counterpart. Thus it is clear that, as in the order of knowing, universals are preceded by particulars, universals not being known with psychological immediacy, but with psychical immediacy which seems to be unconditioned by previous conditions. And thus, for Tennant, "there are no thought-given realities" (I, 65). To sum up:

> "Ideas are mind-made tools, derived from the imaginal and therefore, at a further remove, from the impressional or perceptual: derived from 'what is in the senses' by 'the mind itself'" (I, 66).

The first characteristic of conception being abstraction, Tennant maintains, the second is the explication of relations between things, this process being accentuated by inter-subjective intercourse, with our knowledge of the self, of others, and of the world advancing slowly by means of mutual interaction. But, he holds, before knowledge of other selves as such is possible there must be some crude notion of one's own self. This first appears in knowledge of the bodily self, subsequently in self-consciousness, and then through analogy the affirmation of other selves is reached (I, 72). The idea of a pure ego, or soul, is the last to be acquired in the order of knowing, albeit that in virtue of its being presupposed in all knowing it is in logical order primary. The pure ego is known about mediately and reflectively, for we have no immediate acquaintance of it.

The pure ego, or soul, he asserts, is numerically singular, individual, and possesses idiosyncrasy; it is neither merely cognitive nor a passively receptive tabula rasa, its chief characteristic being to function; and it is real or ontal, not phenomenal. The soul is substantival, continuant, and efficient. As to its origin and destiny, or how it came to be embodied, psychology, according to Tennant, is not able to say.

The nature of personality is comprised of three factors, according to Dr. Tennant. The soul, that which is unique and distinctive in each individual, is the first factor in the determination of personality; the second factor is heredity,

or the sum of inherited endowments; and the third is environment. The inheritance includes instincts and talents: talents are realized combinations of sensory keenness and tempo, mental agility and retentiveness, which vary with the individual and are liable to improvement, whereas instincts are common to the race and do not change through the growth of the individual. For his inheritance as well as for his pure ego man is not responsible, for both are simply given. Responsibility attaches only to the use subsequently made of this material.

Volition, one personality ingredient, is not innate, Tennant continues, but is the outcome of the presence of sensory perception, feeling, conation, ideation, and attention. "There is no such thing as 'the will'...there is only a subject that wills" (I, 131). Volition is not the mere result of various determinations, and cannot be considered by way of physical analogies, because it involves questions of end and value. Motives are not to be conceived as standing over against the subject, but are the subject in action deciding its own course: "an actual motive is the tending of a subject to act" (I, 135). Thus freedom of volition is asserted to be 'subjective determination of volition', freedom and responsibility being affirmed.

Tennant maintains that though aesthetic and moral ideas are not reducible to any of these bases, they nevertheless arise out of combinations of elemental feeling,

desires, and thought, these acquisitions being an instance of epigenesis rather than of strict evolution, which is an unfolding of the preformed. And with the attainment of the social level of experience there appears 'conscience'.

Sense-knowledge, then, is what is gained in sensatio, and is generally characterized by certainty and necessitation, while the first operation of the mind or understanding, as distinguished from sensatio, is in finding or making explicit the existent relations between percepts.

In regard to the 'forms of intuition' which Kant distinguished from the categories of the 'understanding', Tennant advances the view that the concept of space is gradually and inevitably reached by the mind in interaction with objects, and is not an immediate or innate 'pure' intuition. The more fundamental concept of time, developed through experience of duration, succession, and simultaneity, differs perceptually and conceptually, conceptual time being acquired by eliminating the peculiarities of perceived change.

There are formal and real categories of the understanding, he notices, the formal including the mathematical and logical kinds. The mathematical singularity and oneness of things is derived by the mind from the sense-given, and the logical categories are reached through comparison, as for example the categories of likeness and diversity, these formal categories being matters of certain and universal fact. However, Tennant holds, with the real categories of

substance (abiding unity) and cause (efficient activity) we are on a somewhat different plane, for they are supposed or 'read in', and then verified.

These foregoing considerations concerning the capacities of the human mind thus introduce us to Tennant's investigation of thought as thinking-process. Thinking is viewed by him to be an experimental process, a type of guess work, and is not mere observation or logical relating: it seeks unity and identity in diversity. Thus he finds that it is a largely alogical process which produces conclusions for logical method to handle.

As for the difference between the terms 'reason' and 'rational', the former is associated with the "teleological and conational, interpretative and analogical" (I, 191), and the latter is associated with formal logic. Reason has often been regarded as an original or divine faculty, or lumen naturale, but psychology, he asserts, is not able to find any such faculty.

At this point in his developing philosophical structure Tennant considers the various theories of knowledge. Rationalism is seen by him to be based upon several unfounded dogmas such as, for example, that reason is a faculty independent of sense, and in general rests upon an invalid identification of thought with knowledge. He contends that as psychology has found no ready-made original faculty as reason, reason does not develop in independence of the

acquisition of sensory experience. More precisely, "reason comes not so much out of, as through or by means of, sense" (I, 197). And although it is permissible to call that mental capacity which makes knowledge possible, a priori, there is no original a priori knowledge. Actually, Tennant pronounces, rationalism has often held as self-evident, axioms, which are in reality empirical inductive generalizations.

Empiricism, employing the ordo cognoscendi, is of course the method preferred by Tennant for acquiring knowledge, and indeed is held by him to be the only sure and valid method. Empiricism has been employed much less frequently than rationalism, he acknowledges, and has not been pursued thoroughly by any single thinker, unless it be James Ward (I, 217). Empiricism cannot acknowledge any validity in the rationalistic method of deducing or deriving

> "the actual from the possible, existence from essence, qualitative diversity from identity, the qualitative from the quantitative, the finite many from the infinite or absolute One, the perceptual from the conceptual, the historical from the timeless, causal rapport from logical or from factitious relation, change from immutability" (I, 218).

In turning to the other epistemological enquiry as to the nature of our knowledge or what it is that we know, Tennant considers realism, idealism, and phenomenalism. Phenomenalism, of a more advanced kind than Kant's, is forwarded by Tennant as the only solution which accounts for the facts. The noumenal world is known through the phenomenal world: our knowledge may not be an exact copy of

reality but it is at least 'relevant' thereto. In any case, he insists, phenomenal knowledge is sufficient to enable us to see meaning in the world, even without absolute ontal knowledge.

The inductive generalizations of science which provide the premises from which deductive logic may operate are of a probable nature, Tennant stresses, and are not to be taken as logical certifications. They are not self-evident in the sense of being unmediated intuitions, and they are not capable of rigid proof: they are pragmatically verified hypotheses, possessing relevance to Nature and overwhelming conviction, it may be, but they cannot be regarded as strict logical proofs. Thus probability is seen by him to be the guide of science as well as the guide of life.

Psychology deals with the believing process, Tennant continues, and logic or epistemology deals with propositions believed; the former is concerned with certitude ('I am certain that'), whereas the latter is concerned with certainty ('It is certain that'). Psychologically, belief differs from knowledge ("or what passes for 'knowledge' worth having", I, 296) only in degree, there being no sharp antithetical distinction between the two. 'Faith' differs from 'belief' in that it is more conative than cognitive, belief being mere assent more or less thrust upon us, whereas faith is a venture common to science and religion, extending beyond the realm of given actualities to the ideally possible

(a most common occurrence, he claims). Trust differs from faith in the respect that it presupposes belief in an established object.

Tennant sums up his argument thus far by stressing the fundamental importance of our sensory experience as the original basis of all our higher thoughts and ideas:

> "It is sense that furnishes the essential core of the primary meaning of reality, involved in the distinction of knowledge from thought; and it is only by conceptual supplementation of sense-data (and the subjective states they evoke) by minds which, through intercommunion, have attained the common standpoint, that there emerge the notions of Reality, phenomenal and ontal or ultimate, the physical sciences and metaphysics. Religious beliefs and theological doctrines also, according to such theory of knowledge, can only be derived indirectly from study of the sensible world, man's soul and human history" (I, 306).

Going on to a consideration of religious experience, Tennant alleges that if normal religious experience contains any unique cognitive or affective elements that are not found in other types of experience it must be in virtue of a unique experience-producing object, otherwise there is nothing distinctive in the components of religious sentiment. To posit an objective numinous or spiritual environment is sufficient, he holds, to account for such 'psychically' immediate, though not 'psychologically' immediate, apprehension of the numinous. It is a further question however whether such an environment is real and not merely imaginal or ideal, it being well known that the latter categories of conceptions inspire great emotions and conduct when they are believed in.

That mystical experience occurs cannot be gainsaid, Tennant declares, but it would be invalid to accept uncritically the mystic's own interpretation of it if the mystic asserts that it is immediate or certain or has metaphysical implications. If the mystic's experience is confessedly ineffable, then, though it cannot be proved that he was not in contact with reality, it is ipso facto of no value for knowledge inasmuch as his truth-claims cannot be tested. As for that class of mystical experiences which are described to some extent, Tennant asserts that there is usually an unconscious reading-in of interpretation, or theological content, into the experience, a doctrine or philosophy which was learned previously under normal conditions, so that even if they are perhaps valid private experiences they are nevertheless without value for truth. Similarly he finds no psychological reasons for substantiating the claim that in mystic experience there is exercised a higher faculty.

> "It would seem, then, that religious experience in general, and mystical experience in particular, afford no reasons, as distinct from psychological causes, for doubting that all that can be called by the vague word 'knowledge', is dependent on sense and thought" (I, 324).

Of the relation of religious belief to natural knowledge, Tennant maintains that the knowledge which we have of ourselves, of others, and of the world provides the surfficient framework for a natural rise of religious ideas and theological beliefs, no 'transcendent faculty' being needed.

Whether such views are valid or reasonable can only be established latterly, Tennant insists, "by use of the discursive method and by comprehensive survey of 'knowledge'" (I, 325). Differing intellectual beliefs throughout the world account for the many differing religions, religious experiences occuring throughout the world: what differentiates them one from another are the varying intellectual contributions, the uniqueness of religious experience being always determined by the theological concept previously developed by the mind and automatically and unconsciously infused into the experience.

Tennant finds suggestions towards a teleological interpretation of the world in (1) the intelligibility of the world, (2) the apparent adaptedness of organic beings, (3) the appropriateness of the inorganic world as a home for life, (4) the world's evocativeness of aesthetic values, (5) the instrumentality of the world to the productiveness of morality, (6) the emergence of human rational and moral capacities. The essential question is then seen to be whether this ordered Nature is the result of wisdom or of undesigned chance, and it is emphasized that in view of the wonderful complexity of the world the latter explanation needs still further explanation. Though the teleological inference from these cumulative facts to the notion of "a creative Spirit" (II, 113) is not strictly a logical one, Tennant believes that it is nevertheless by no means unreasonable. In fact, the sufficient ground of all these

data appears to him to be that of "an efficient, intelligent, ethical Being" (II, 121).

Yet, though design implies creation, Tennant contends that no more than a finite God or a spiritualistic pluralism is required by teleological, empirical considerations. He refines the idea of creation to the assertion that God is

> "essentially the world-ground or creator; not another cause in the series, or a being who might or might not have created. God qua God is creator, and the creator qua creator is God: or 'God without the world is not God'....Creation can be conceived as idea and deed together, and the divine transcendence as not temporal priority, but as consisting in the difference between God and His utterance--which pantheism identifies" (II, 129).

This world-ground, by virtue of being creator and designer, that is, by virtue of possessing intelligence, valuation, and volition, is held to be personal. And, if personal, then self-conscious. From unity of purpose to singularity of purposer, however, is a further question for Tennant.

In any case, we are free to use the term God, inasmuch as there is unity of purpose. In Tennant's system God is 'non-infinite', and in view of God's creation of free creatures with a certain amount of creative ability, this self-limitation necessarily limits His omniscience concerning some of the particular results of freedom, even though the general world-scheme is under His control and omniscience.

Prologue to the problem of evil is Tennant's assertion that this is the best possible world. And with this recognition he hurries on to define the terms 'best' and 'possible'

'Best' is taken to refer to instrumentality to moral values, rather than to mere sensual pleasantness. And concerning the term 'possibility', Tennant alleges that the notion of God without a world is an abstraction, and if the general arrangements of this world had been different from what they are, we would be confronted with a different kind of God. In other words, upon observing actuality the human mind then invents many possibilities.

> "God and his world are the ground and cause of the distinction between the possible and the impossible, and between the possible and the actual" (II, 183).

Determinateness excludes possibilities, Tennant emphasizes, and God never was an indeterminate being. The eternal truths are neither the <u>prius</u> nor the product of God's being and activity. But if the world was to be a suitable place for morality, it had to be of a developing kind, for 'morality' requires freedom and cannot be created ready-made. And so we have "an evolutionary cosmos in which free agents live and learn, make choices and build characters" (II, 185).

Tennant's theism in its transcendent aspect holds that though the nature of the world depends on the nature of God, who is its ground, and not vice versa, the world is other than God and possesses a measure of devolved autonomy. Yet there is also an immanent activity involved in the realization of values in the world. And in a sense there is a divine influence in man, but this influence, Tennant claims, must be regarded as a general activity,

for ethical theism

cannot think that God would override moral personality. It is not necessary, he thinks, to invoke immanent activity to account for mankind's acquisition of rationality, morality, conscience, theology, etc., nor immanent inspiration to account for the progressive discovery by man of the nature of God.

Tennant recognizes that there is indeed a sense in which there is a revelation that enables men to attain insights into and develop knowledge about the heart of things, but this he holds is never to be construed as impressed coercion. And with alleged communications of truths above reason he allows empirical theology no concern, 'revealed' religion, as in Christ for example, being the culminating phase of natural religion. "Christ revealed God in that he understood Him and has enabled us...to see as he saw" (II, 241).

Thus "God and the world and man is the theistic formula for the totality of what is known to exist" (II, 255). In the order of knowing, Tennant reaffirms, God is known last, while knowledge of the self and the world grows gradually and interdependently from the first stages.

> "The world and man constitute an organic whole whose ground is God, and whose raison d'être is realization of the good, or love" (II, 259).

Dr. Tennant's philosophy has been challenged at the point of its treatment of knowledge of other selves and of God by the 'I-Thou' epistemologists of recent times, whether

effectively or not does not matter to the specific subject of this thesis, and of course more or less orthodox theologians would not find themselves able to accept his judgements in regard to religious experience, Christology, divine immanence, providence, revelation, etc.

His thought, though thoroughly and consistently empiricistic in method of procedure, may safely be termed 'rationalistic' in the sense that he makes an attempt to explain everything in terms of the categories of human reason, without recourse to the category of 'paradox' which has been extensively employed in contemporary theology. The validity of several of the doctrines of Christianity, at least in the present state of knowledge, of course, stands or falls with the choice between a theological method which attempts thoroughgoing explanation and one which employs 'paradox'.

Tennant's Philosophical Theology has, however, been highly acclaimed even by some who are unalterably opposed to his method and his approach to theology.[1] It is on the recommended reading lists at Yale, Union, and Garrett Seminaries, in the U. S. A., where it has apparently had more influence, especially upon some of the younger teachers and writers, than in Great Britain. John Bennett referred to it as "the most persuasive statement of the intellectual basis for Christian faith" which he knew;[2] and the highest

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[1] For example, William Temple, in his preface to his Nature, Man and God.

[2] Christianity and Our World, p. 65.

praise has been offered it by, e.g., John Oman,[1] R. L. Calhoun,[2] W. G. DeBurgh,[3] G. Dawes Hicks,[4] Charles Gore,[5] and C. D. Broad, whose following summary reaction is worthey of consideration:

> "I cannot, indeed, pretend to believe that ethical theism has been, or could be, established by such arguments as these....(but) Dr. Tennant's method at least ensures those who use it against nonsense, enthusiasm, and credulity....and, if one must try to explain the ultimate and formulate the innefable, Dr. Tennant's type of conclusion is perhaps the least unintelligible explanation and the least misleading formulation available to us here and now".[6]

Though it has been thus highly regarded by many leading thinkers, it has not as a rule become familiar to seminary students, about whom it was said by Broad: "they could not be better employed than in studying Dr. Tennant's work".[7]

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[1] Journal of Theological Studies, XXXI, p. 406.
[2] Journal of Religion, XI, p. 461.
[3] Journal of Philosophical Studies, III, 12, p. 542.
[4] Hibbert Journal, XXVIII, p. 174.
[5] The Philosophy of the Good Life, p. 257n (Everyman edition).
[6] Mind, XXXIX, pp. 483-4.
[7] Mind, XXXVIII, p. 94.

Chapter II: The Nature of Sin

Definition of Sin

In his endeavor to formulate a definition of sin such as will be unambiguous and clear-cut, and acceptable to both ethics and essential Christian theology, Tennant first consults the concept of sin that appears in the New Testament. He realizes at the outset that the theologians' interest is not simply with 'moral evil', but also with the relation of man to God, God being the ground of the distinction between good and evil and the one judge and forgiver. Though sin is always moral evil, it is for the Christian antithetical not only to moral correctness but also to holiness, sin being "the Christian name for what ethics calls 'moral evil'".[1] Tennant finds in the Gospels that Jesus brands as 'sin' only those acts which are contrary to the known will of God and for which the person can be considered responsible, and asserts that

> "there is no case in which He can, without question, be considered to call, or which compels us to infer that He would call, by the name 'sin', any deviation from the objective right or good, in which the agent was, through no moral fault of his own, ignorant that he was contravening the law of God".[2]

From this Tennant concludes that a conception of sin cannot include as sinful any actions for which men are not accountable to God without conflicting with Christ's express teachings about sin.[3] Paul he sees to have allowed himself

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[1] The Concept of Sin, p. 24.
[2] Ibid., p. 29.
[3] Ibid., p. 33.

at times to apply the term 'sin' alike to guilty and guiltless conduct, and to thereby initiate an inconsistent usage, but by and large the essential idea that Tennant finds in the New Testament in this respect is the association of sin with 'guilt'.[1]

In his full definition of sin Tennant maintains that there are four essential conditions of sinful conduct. The first condition is the existence of some standard of which sin is the falling short.[2] He does not allow ethical perfection as a standard, however, for though all sin is imperfection, not all imperfection is sin.[3] And the usage of ethical perfection as an absolute standard by which conduct is to be regarded as sinful or sinless entails the neglect of natural differences in dispositions and capacities. For example, a man who struggles hard to overcome some bad habit unwittingly acquired and who yet may not attain to the level of excellence of one who by nature disliked such a habit, may not be considered as virtuous or perfect as the latter, but from another standpoint is actually more meritorious. Accordingly, Tennant insists that if the concept of perfection is to be used as the standard by which we are to measure sinfulness, it must at least be interpreted not as absolute but as a 'sliding-scale' relevant to the varying capacities of differing persons.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 43.
[2] Ibid., p. 47.
[3] Ibid., p. 48.
[4] Ibid., p. 57.

There is a further question, Tennant notices, as to the proper definition of ethical conduct. In agreement with Kant and Sidgwick, he maintains that the proper sphere of the 'ethical' has to do with that conduct which is the direct outcome of volition and intention, the good being the good will itself and not the talents and wisdom which a man may possess.[1]

The point seems obvious to Tennant, then, that the usual connotations of the terms 'perfection' and 'moral excellence' include more than can properly lie within the sphere of 'ethical' evaluation and condemnation, and, if

> "the value which we assign to extra-volitional factors in conduct and 'character', in virtue of their power to evoke admiration in us, be not 'strictly' ethical, there remains the further question whether it should be called 'ethical' or 'moral' at all".[2]

Quite frequently, Tennant states, Christian theologians overlook this and employ some such standard as perfection or moral excellence as a norm by which to regard conduct as sinful or not, whereas they should have been careful to distinguish what is actually aesthetic approval from what is strictly ethical approval, for though "ethics and aesthetics are, of course, cognate sciences",[3] ethics loses its unique standpoint unless it is concerned solely with instances of merit and demerit. He stresses that the

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[1] Ibid., p. 66.
[2] Ibid., p. 67.
[3] Ibid., p. 70.

distinction between ethical goodness and aesthetic beauty of conduct must be maintained, especially when the questions of sin and deviation from ethical standards are under consideration.

> "An artist may rightly be disparaged, as an artist, if he be deficient in the powers of imagination and conception and in the ability to give skillful expression to the product of these powers; but as a moral being a man cannot be blamed for deficiency in natural endowments such as might render his approximation to the mixed ideal of 'perfection' easy. Ethics, in the strict sense, has no concern with the 'talents', their nature and amount, committed to an individual nor with the total to which they contribute; its evaluation is applicable only to the volitional use made of them".[1]

And if one does allow any such absolute standard as the criterion of meritorious conduct a sharp contrast is thereby presented between ethics and traditional Christian theory, for ethics is not permitted to sanction the view of "relative and varying perfection", whereas theology has as a rule employed the view of "absolute and invariable perfection".[2]

This general contention is aptly illustrated and confirmed by Christ's charge to love God with all our heart, soul, and strength, to love God, in other words, as best as one is able, regardless of how He might be loved by another.[3] It is, indeed, generally agreed that Christ's injunction that we be perfect even as our Heavenly Father is perfect needs qualification in order to be understood by or have relevance to us. To be perfect must necessarily mean one thing in the divine case and another in the human, for perfection requires

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[1] Ibid., p. 71.
[2] Ibid., p. 77.
[3] Ibid., p. 76.

the use of such intellectual and non-volitional capacities as do not seem to be granted to man; and therefore the ideal of perfection is held by Tennant to be unattainable under our present dispensation of finiteness, and though we may be entitled to speak of imperfection when this ideal is unrealized due to insufficiency or endowment, it is not open to us to use the term 'sin'.[1]

This point being made, the remaining alternative interpretation of 'ethical perfection' is seen to be the full and best use of whatever abilities we may possess. This ideal will, in accordance with mankind's diverse and varying talents and stages, necessarily be a non-static, fluctuating, standard, dependent in its application upon differing instances.[2]

> "Perfection is thus comparable to a fixed ratio rather than to a fixed quantity. The falling, at any moment, below the standard of excellence possible to an individual at that moment, will be something which the individual <u>might</u> have avoided and <u>ought</u> to have avoided; it is really and truly sin".[3]

To those who might object to this conclusion on the supposition that it is a rather useless conception because of its indeterminableness, Tennant submits that it is the only definition which is free from inconsistency, and that it is not our business to judge even if we could perceive all sin that is committed. And in any case, as only God can forgive sin, so He alone is able in most cases to know

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 80.
[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 80.
[3] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 81.

the inwardness and extent of sin.[1]

By way of concluding these foregoing emphases, Tennant affirms that an absolute standard cannot be superimposed on the behaviour of men of any type or nature,

> "without making sin a metaphysical necessity, a consequence of the limitations belonging to the finite as such: without making sin, in fact, precisely what it is not".[2]

The traditional view of sin seemed appropriate, Tennant stresses, to theologians and philosophers who did not have the conceptions of development and growth ready to hand, but he thinks that the recent prominence of these conceptions has uncovered difficulties not previously recognized, with the result that the prevailing orthodox concept of sin, like several other theological beliefs, now needs to be reconsidered in the light of modern studies.

The view which thus far emerges from the considerations mentioned above is that sin is "deviation, during a given stage of moral growth, from the highest that is attainable at that stage",[3] this idea emphasizing as constant the form rather than the content of the moral standard, and actually strengthening, according to Tennant, the claim of morality, for

> "it is only because morality, in the sense of a code or content, is everywhere relative to circumstances and natural conditions over which men have no control, that it is binding, as to its form, in any place or at any time".[4]

How God will deal with men who fall short of the right and

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[1] Ibid., p. 81.
[2] Ibid., p. 83.
[3] Ibid., p. 85.
[4] Ibid., p. 85.

the good merely through lack of talent or privilege is the office of God Himself. In any case, we may feel assured that

> "God at least does not expect His children to make bricks without straw; nor does He deem them guilty for lack of what He Himself has withheld from them ....The 'law' of which sin is the transgression must rather have a different content for different men, and for the same man at different times".[1]

The second condition of sinful conduct listed by Tennant is awareness by the individual of some norm or standard as binding upon him, i.e. a person cannot be adjudged moral from another person's surveyal of him, unless he is aware of an ethical norm himself. The individual must possess or have access to some knowledge of a moral standard which ought to be fulfilled or ought not to be violated, and he must have this knowledge at the time when the action occurs, otherwise his conduct cannot be said to be relevant to moral considerations.[2]

It is, in fact, generally accepted that it is the motive and intention which is commendable or reprehensible rather than the mere external congruity of behaviour with a moral standard, such congruity being of no moral significance, and that an action may be quite immoral even though it fits perfectly with the ideal. Instances of nonmoral beings with no capacity to judge right or wrong or to be aware of a moral law are lower animals and infants. Those who would censure the infant's unrestrained impulses,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 86-7.
[2] Ibid., p. 92.

Tennant declares, are logically obliged to do the same with cats and birds, and, in fact, falling rocks.[1]

Passing on to a consideration of persons such as primitives and heathen who though crudely aware of some rudimentary ethical law have yet never been confronted by an advanced ideal, Tennant asserts that their relation to the ideal is exactly similar to the relation of nonmoral beings to any ideal at all. Such a person who is by circumstances ignorant of a great ideal or of any ideal at all is nonmoral in regard to that ideal even if he in no way fulfills it. His falling short is unavoidable, and therefore nonmoral.[2]

The words 'at the time' in an above quoted statement were carefully chosen by Tennant as being important in determining what conduct is sinful, as is illustrated by the cases of heathen who are converted to Christianity. Upon the advent of the new instruction such persons very often condemn their previous conduct, though it may have been fully in accordance with the light then available to them. But it must be denied that such self-appraisal is just, he insists, if they were doing the best possible to them in their earlier state. Regret might be a legitimate emotion in this instance, but a remorseful feeling of guilt would not be.[3] To speak of a person's conduct as sinful, when he

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[1] Ibid., pp. 96-8.
[2] Ibid., pp. 99-100.
[3] Ibid., p. 102.

was not at the time aware that there was a higher standard being transgressed or unfulfilled, is to either misidentify sin and imperfection, he states, or to confuse an earlier with a later condition.[1]

But though it is true that we must not be held accountable for failing to do what is impossible for us, and that 'sin is not imputed where there is not law', Tennant acknowledges that there is nevertheless a guilty ignorance which is quite a different matter from innocent ignorance, God again, of course, being the only good judge of the one and the other.

> "Knowledge slighted, trifled with, obscured, and eventually lost, is not at all the same thing as knowledge unreceived and inaccessible. Nor is knowledge which one might have been in possession of but for indolence, indifference, or aversion to consequences".[2]

Then, he asks, what about a person who through persistent misuse of moral functions gradually loses the power of conscience, and whose volitional and cognitive abilities deteriorate? Of the guiltiness involved in letting oneself enter a state of moral atrophy he has no doubt, but this event he distinguishes from the question of sinfulness attaching to acts committed when the powers of will, apprehension, and conscience have declined to the point of demoralization (though he thinks it is unlikely that complete moral atrophy ever occurs). Then is the sinner in no wise responsible for his behaviour after moral decay sets in, granting that he is certainly accountable for the situation having come to exist, as he is for his actions while in a

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[1] Ibid., p. 103.
[2] Ibid., p. 106.

comparatively alert stage of moral apprehension?[1] Tennant maintains that inasmuch as one has to be capable of moral knowledge, discrimination, and volition before his conduct can be censured as sinful,

> "he does not add to his guilt by the objectively wrong deeds which he commits after that his moral prerogatives have been lost. Being no longer moral, he can no longer sin".[2]

Toward substantiating this claim Tennant adduces the instances of human behaviour during seasons of great emotion or passion, such as fear, anger, and intoxication, as examples of conduct which common sense seldom regards as guilty or sinful. We may hold responsible though, he declares, the man who lets himself get into such states, even without considering as sinful his actions while in insensible states. And as to the behaviour of psychotics, Tennant notices that scarcely anyone today imputes guiltiness. All these, then, are recognized as types of character which are quite obviously from an external and objective standpoint reprehensible, but which current common sense defers to the realm of the nonmoral.[3]

Upon completing this point, that the moral absolute which is binding on all men is the obligation to do the best one knows to do, whatever his faculties and the circumstances, Tennant makes it clear that this view

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[1] Ibid., pp. 112-3.
[2] Ibid., p. 114.
[3] Ibid., pp. 116-7.

> "does not detract from the majesty of the moral law or tamper with its flexibility. Rather does it safeguard both. The content of the moral ideal, in so far as it is a moral ideal for a particular person, is determined by the distinctive nature of that person and the conditions of his environment. Christian theology must maintain this if it would remain faithful to revealed knowledge of God (not to speak of consistency with the bare requirements of ethics)".[1]

And he is convinced that this view does not lessen the sinfulness of sin, inasmuch as it recognizes that men have not lived up to the standards which they are capable of, and therefore rightly deserve the judgement of a just God.[2]

The third condition of sinful conduct is represented by him to be the fomes peccati, the crude material out of which the will constructs sinful activity, the identification of this 'material of sin' with sin itself, according to Tennant, being a confusion which leads to serious difficulties.[3]

Tennant's discussion at this point deals extensively with psychological questions. Though ethics is a normative science, it is held by him to presuppose an empirical substructure of facts, and thus he sets out from a psychological basis.

The simplest mental attitudes are recognized to be those of pleasure and pain, usually termed 'feeling'. They are thrust upon us and we only passively receive them; for example, pain is occasioned in us by a toothache, and pleasure from kindness shown us. Emotions differ in that they can to some degree be controlled by the will, though they

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[1] Ibid., p. 120.
[2] Ibid., p. 120.
[3] Ibid., p. 124.

are rather similar to instincts and appetites, and are neutral prior to the operation of the will.[1]

> "No one can help feeling anger, physical fear, or antipathy, on occasions; any one may erect on them vindictiveness or righteous wrath, cowardice or courage, irrational hostility or charity, respectively. As incentives to volition and action, suppliers of motive, they form part of the material whence sin may be made, but they are equally the necessary foundations of virtue."[2]

The different conative activities are discussed at this juncture. There are blind organic cravings, such as hunger and thirst, hunger becoming 'appetite', however, when to any degree the mind recognizes some object which can satisfy the craving. And appetites differ from instincts in the spontaneity of their appearance, and from impulses in that they are more deep-seated and under less volitional control, the satisfaction or frustration of appetite being inevitably and normally accompanied by sensations of pleasure or pain.[3]

Instincts, of which there are very few, are inherited, adaptive responses to external stimuli, and as they are for the most part "superseded rather than regulated by volition", they can scarcely be included in the fomes peccati. An impulse differs from an instinct in that it results partly from a craving as well as from the excitation of a stimulus, and issues in an uncoordinated, undeliberate way out of the circumstances of the moment.[4]

When an impulse is directed by some thought of the consequences or end which is involved, Tennant continues,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 125-30.
[2] Ibid., p. 130.
[3] Ibid., pp. 132-3.
[4] Ibid., p. 135.

it is more properly known as 'desire', man's desires being the expression of his character, with his character often including a field of conflicting desires. The selected desire, further, becomes a 'wish', and with this assertion Tennant arrives at a discussion of the will. In this regard, he notices that people often wish something without actually willing it, inasmuch as will also involves intention and activity, will being not mere wishing, but a conscious action performed with some end in view.[1]

It is possible to study the characteristics of purely impulsive human behaviour, without resort to conceptual abstraction and its attendant pitfalls, Tennant contends, because such activity is presented in the behaviour of the child who has not yet acquired volition or conscience, it being important to examine the nature and development of human mentality in order to ascertain the materials from which the will manufactures sin. In his effort to find out how sin arises in the race and in the individual, Tennant sets out to compare human nature as it is before and after morality emerges, hoping that such a comparison will serve to clarify the difference between nonmoral imperfection and sin itself, and to emphasize the sometimes disregarded distinction between sin and the 'material of sin'. It should further, he thinks, bring home the truth that the will is destined, upon the emergence of morality, to an indefinite struggle with the subverting habits of sense and impulse, which are by that time firmly situated in human nature.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 136-7.

Again, the will does not produce sin from a vacuum but from some fomes peccati, and this material, though it must be differentiated from sin proper, is nevertheless an indispensable element in the construction of sinful behaviour, and must be considered in any account of the nature and origin of sin. "It supplies the motive to the will without which sin is not only inexplicable, but impossible".[1]

These conative tendencies, he pronounces, are (1) 'nonmoral'. They are nonmoral because involuntary, morality being relevant only to what is voluntary; some are held in common with brutes concerning whom no one attaches moral judgements; and they are part and parcel of our nature before the advent of both volition and conscience.[2] Whatever use of these propensities the will makes previous to the emergence of moral knowledge Tennant holds to be of no moral consequence, though he recognizes that to many the apparent alliance of the incipient will with these hereditary propensities has seemed to be a stupendous occurrence fraught with theological significance, with the consequence that there has been a great vogue for theories of radical evil, original sin, a timeless fall, and a bias toward evil, etc. It seems to Tennant just as fair, however, to assign a bias toward good to the emergent will, inasmuch as it certainly does not always align itself with objectively regarded evil, and he infers that to whatever extent the infant performs good actions rather than bad ones, to that extent it is just

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[1] Ibid., pp. 138-40.
[2] Ibid., p. 140.

as appropriate to posit a bias toward good. As a matter of fact, Tennant insists, the only bias the will can have is that which it works out for itself through its own activity. And the idea of a bias toward evil neglects to recognize that volition and morality develop gradually; indeed, the idea can only be presented upon the foundations of the doctrine of original righteousness and the obsolete faculty psychology.[1]

These conative tendencies are (2) 'neutral', in that they may be used by the will for good or evil.[2]

> "Our impulses and passions can therefore no more be called 'sinful', in the strict sense, than alcohol or dynamite; and such use of language should be banished from what professes to be exact theology".[3]

And (3) these tendencies are 'necessary' to the continuance, health, and growth of life. They are normal human endowments by virtue of Divine creativity, and man is not accountable for the first difficulty of properly using them. Tennant finds no reason for tracing the existence of these tendencies to a corrupted inherited nature, and maintains that before the child reaches the level of morality and responsibility, his impulses are merely the expression of his life's purpose.[4]

He then proceeds to emphasize that this material of sin is as indispensable as is the will before sin can be produced, and that the conflict between 'flesh' and 'spirit' is an inevitable if not a logically necessary precondition of human morality. This conflict, he decides, can no longer

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[1] Ibid., p. 142.
[2] Ibid., p. 143.
[3] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 167.
[4] The Concept of Sin, p. 145.

be regarded as the result of some early fall or timelessly acquired bias. Such propensities must now be regarded as a necessary and normal inheritance from our animal ancestry, volition and moral reason being the superadded endowment, the so-called 'divine image' in man.[1]

These conative tendencies which persist even after assertion of reason and will, Tennant concludes, are the remainder of our pre-human ancestry, being developed in the automatic and impulsive nature of the animal, with no view toward the future moral life of man.

> "They still assert themselves without alteration or obsolescence now that morality has been attained; and they operate entirely independently of moral ends and moral judgements. There is no pre-established harmony in the life of man whereby appetite shall only be evoked on occasions convenient from the moral point of view....Hence arises unavoidably the conflict between appetite and conscience, between lower and higher desire".[2]

And so a large portion of the moral life is occupied with the control and regulation of natural and normal impulsive tendencies. Man is not to blame, Tennant holds, if the satisfaction of such impulses brings enjoyment, nor is he to blame for the circumstance that these pleasures are more attractive in the early period of morality than those resulting from the noble use of conscience. This fact of conflict, of human conduct divided with itself, he maintains to be the indispensable setting for the production of moral behaviour. A world without temptation or motivation toward evil would be an impossible field for the growth of character,

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[1] Ibid., p. 146.
[2] Ibid., p. 148.

for it is only through conflict with self that moral personality is able to develop.[1] It would not have been possible, he believes, for men ever to have developed conscience had we always been creatures of one motive, with no incentive toward evil.[2]

And by way of summing up thus far, Tennant emphasizes that

> "a concept of sin such as shall be of universal application must be framed in the light of the indisputable facts that man is conscious before he is self-conscious, impulsively appetitive before he is volitional, and volitional before he is moral".[3]

The fourth condition of moral conduct he determines to be the real capacity for effective choice between a recognized higher and lower alternative. Now, he states the characteristics of volition to be intention, activity, and freedom. As for intention, not all the consequences of willing are actually intended, and such they must be if they are to be liable to moral evaluation; though, on the other hand, our Lord made it clear that the intention alone is sufficient to make sin, whether or not any activity is involved or any result ensues.[4]

The will, of course, must be free if moral censure is to attach to any of its actions. Freedom of the will does not, indeed, have to be argued to most Christian theologians, and in the present connection Tennant does not dwell upon it at great length. This freedom is neither indeterminism nor mere

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[1] Ibid., pp. 149-153.
[2] Ibid., p. 154.
[3] Ibid., p. 155.
[4] Ibid., pp. 161-2.

caprice, he stresses; there are always conditioning circumstances and determining factors present, but these antecedents are not the entire explanation of conduct, for freedom of choice is exercised in the moulding and directing of this 'plastic material'.[1]

> "The self is the character plus something more....(and) -- in its transcendence and partial independence of all past experience -- lies the real spring of moral decision".[2]

Real freedom such as this description provides, though it may not be strictly demonstrable, is of course a necessary ingredient of morality and a precondition of the possibility of sin, and must be accepted, if Christian theology is to have an ethic, as the most satisfactory explanation of experience. Tennant concludes this consideration by acknowledging that the entire basis of morality collapses if the concept of freedom with its logical corollary, responsibility, is abandoned.[3]

The impulses and appetites described above, he recognizes, are usually termed 'primary springs of action', and lead to the consideration of 'secondary springs of action', or those desires which are infused with a degree of volition, it being with the emergence of the higher modes of consciousness, such as self-consciousness, will, and conscience, that these secondary springs first occur, and in which we can first recognize the possibilities of sinful behaviour.[4] And with the rise of such additional springs the mind soon becomes

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[1] Ibid., pp. 164-5.
[2] Ibid., p. 166.
[3] Ibid., p. 171.
[4] Ibid., p. 182.

able to invent and imagine means for intensifying appetites to more frequent demands for satisfaction, the areas of temptation being stimulated by the misuse of improved powers of thought and imagination.[1]

As temptation has sometimes been confused with sin, it is important, Tennant thinks, to clarify this point before proceeding with the formulation of a concept of sin. Now, temptation does not occur, he states, unless the person involved is aware of at least two conflicting desires or impulses within him, the one of which he believes to be of inferior worth. And it must be remembered that the degree of the merit in resisting temptation depends on the strength of the appealing desire, lest the fallacy that the amount of difference between conduct and some objective standard of perfection determines the amount of sin is re-embraced.[2]

Temptation, of course, is not sin. Some temptation is the result of human habit and ingenuity, but in the first instance it precedes any moral choice, and in general its incidence is not the fault of human volition; Jesus Christ himself was tempted, yet remained without sin.[3] What the will does with its temptation indeed becomes a matter for censure or approval, because the will may determine which directions the attentions of the mind takes, and it can intensify motives to dominate other motives. "It can thus strengthen weaker, and weaken stronger, 'motives'".[4]

Sin, then, does not appear until volition has acquiesced

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[1] Ibid., p. 186.
[2] Ibid., pp. 189-190.
[3] Ibid., p. 192.
[4] Ibid., p. 193.

in a desire forbidden by the conscience. But as it may be sinful to think on something without doing it, it is also sinful to 'court' temptation, to play with an idea known to be wrong, even though the action is not performed.[1]

That an accurate theory of sin is of direct moment for the practical devotional life as well as for doctrine may be seen, Tennant hopes, in the cases of many religious persons who in their introspective fervor invalidly overburden themselves with feelings of guilt.[2]

This concept of sin is further valuable, Tennant maintains, in that it helps us to form a more adequate view of human nature, i.e., it neither allows the pleasures of sense to be regarded as intrinsically degrading, nor sanctions the supposition that it pleases God when we suppress any such proper pleasures, for it recognizes them as one of the heavenly gifts meant to be cultivated and enjoyed.[3] And it teaches us that such poetic terms as 'sinful appetites' and 'evil impulses' are not legitimate theology, because not valid psychology.[4]

Lest the foregoing treatment seems to moral psychologists oversimplified, Tennant appropriately says that an individual's conflict with self is not a mere battle between right and wrong -- rather as a rule are the appeals of the good and of the evil complexly intermingled in our experience.[5]

In concluding this consideration, Tennant recognizes

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[1] Ibid., pp. 195-6.
[2] Ibid., pp. 197-8.
[3] Ibid., p. 199.
[4] Ibid., p. 201.
[5] Ibid., p. 202.

the distinction between sin as a state, and the separate sinful products of the volition. Repeated indulgence, though, he sees, strengthens the appetites and desires and makes it increasingly difficult to refrain from sinful courses, and, accordingly, sinfulness comes to inhere not only in particular evil actions but also in the character itself, which is a 'habit of will'.[1]

These four mentioned conditions, then, are necessary to sin, that is, if sin is regarded as wrong activity for which a person is responsible and accountable, and therefore guilty, and if, conversely, the term sin has no bearing upon any conduct which was either unavoidable or irresponsible.[2]

Tennant rejects the attempt to base a doctrine of sin upon the individual's 'sin-consciousness', or sense of guilt, by invoking the distinction between the 'psychic' and 'psychological'.[3] Responsibility, for example, may validly be asserted of a person whether or not he is conscious of responsibility, even though from the psychic standpoint it depends upon the degree of awareness experienced by him. And conversely it is true that a feeling of responsibility is sometimes felt when from an objective or psychological standpoint such a feeling is not justified.[4] Thus, even though men cannot be held accountable for (objectively regarded) evil deeds which they to the best of their intentions considered proper, it is also impossible in the light of modern psychological discoveries to measure guilt solely by the

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[1] Ibid., p. 207.
[2] Ibid., p. 209.
[3] Cf. above, Ch. I, p. 7.
[4] The Concept of Sin, p. 223.

feelings of responsibility that a man may have, it being true that many have crushing self-imposed burdens of guilt where no guilt can be imputed at all. Then, for this reason, Tennant refuses to equate guilt with consciousness of guilt, nor sin with the sense of sin.[1] The idea of guilt must connote accountability, he claims, guilt and sin being "correlative and coextensive";[2] and the same four conditions which he found for the possibility of sin he presupposes in any imputation of guilt. And, therefore, inasmuch as there is often no actual sin accompanying psychic consciousness of sin, and often sin where no conviction of sin occurs, there exists no necessary connection between sin-consciousness and sin, and,

> "the individual's psychical apprehension of sin or guilt...cannot possibly supply a foundation on which an universal concept of sin can be constructed".[3]

Briefly, then, Tennant defines sin as "moral imperfection for which an agent is, in God's sight, accountable".[4] And by way of clarification and substantiation of this concept he adduces the following summary considerations:

> "This concept, it is claimed, is logically perfect: it is constant and universal, and also definite. It is the only one which can fully satisfy the implications of the most fundamental of Christian doctrines. It alone is unimpugnable by psychology, ethics (in the stricter sense), science, and history. It alone safeguards sin from confusion at once with imperfection (moral, aesthetic, or physical), with ignorance, with nonmoral conative tendencies, with temptation, with unreal counterpart to illusory individual experience. And if on these accounts it should be indispensable to Christian theology and ethics, it would seem to be also

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[1] Ibid., p. 226.
[2] Ibid., p. 237.
[3] Ibid., p. 244.
[4] Ibid., p. 245.

> of great importance in its bearing upon the moral and religious conduct of life. On the one hand it strikes at the root of morbid self-accusation and discourages the usage of unreal and exaggerated language: on the other, it leads to a doctrine of Sin that may be called 'inward'. It encourages honest searching of the heart and sifting of motive, condemning not merely the deed of violence, but also smouldering hate: not only immoral acts but the cherishing of secret lawless desire. It thus insists, more strongly than can any concept of wider and looser meaning, upon the responsibility of the sinner for his sin. And this is its most important implication. While pronouncing nothing to be sin but that to which guilt attaches, it unconditionally declares that to every sin there attaches guilt. It refuses to shift one whit of the responsibility for <u>real sin</u> to the subject's environment, the conditions of his life, or his natural endowments. Volition, and volition alone, it declares to be sinful. Conversely, immoral volition is affirmed to be sin -- and nothing else: not disease, or inherited weakness, or unavoidable effect of surroundings or any thing but guilty and accountable transgression that ought not to have been and might not have been".[1]

<u>The Origin of Sin</u>

Tennant endeavors to trace the origin of sin in the race in the light of the conception of evolutionary development, and assumes as highly probable that the physical nature of man is a continuous outgrowth from that of the lower animals. The study of anthropology, to begin with, has made available a generally accepted pattern of the racial growth of man out of primitive, crude beginnings. In the earliest society, the 'tribal self' was all-important rather than the 'personal self': there was a solidarity of group consciousness. "The ethical sentiments and the judgments which express them" were, Tennant quotes A. E. Taylor, "in their most primitive form...

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 245-7.

impersonal".[1] Then, out of early merely arbitrary ceremonial practices there in time arose a type of introspective morality, a personal sanction and morality. Now, in view of early savage and brutish practices, Tennant thinks that there is every reason to believe that man's moral sense, that is, "his discovery of a law by which he came to know sin",[2] was slowly acquired, and as man only gradually emerged from a condition of non-morality to a level of reflective morality, he finds it difficult if not impossible to isolate any first sin. Thus he sees that the origin of sin would have been a gradual process rather than a sudden and abrupt fall.[3]

> "The appearance of moral evil, from the evolutionary point of view, would not consist in the performance of a deed such as man had never done before, or whose wickedness he could previously have been fully aware, and for which shame and guilt, as feelings differing in kind from any known before, would overwhelm him; it would rather be the continuance of a primitive society or group of individuals in certain practices or in the satisfying of certain natural impulses, after that these things had come to be regarded as conflicting with a recognized 'sanction' of ethical rank as low as that of tribal custom. The sinfulness of such acts would gradually increase from zero, which was its value in the time of man's nonmoral innocence, as the moral code grew more exacting and more full of content, and the individual's sense of its binding nature deepened. From the point of view of our ethical standards, i.e., objectively considered, the first sins of humanity would be as the sins of early childhood; not the most heinous and momentous in the race's history, but rather the least guilty of all".[4]

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[1] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 90. Quoted from Problems of Conduct, p. 124. For a full account of the higher moral concepts, obligation, conscience, responsibility, merit, etc., Tennant recommends Taylor's chapter on the "Roots of Ethics".

[2] Ibid., p. 91.

[3] Ibid., p. 92.

[4] Ibid., p. 93.

And concerning the question of the guiltiness of such actions, Tennant maintains that the degree of guilt depends not upon the standard which is transgressed but upon the extent to which the person could have realized himself to be subject to the standard, and upon the respect for it which he was capable of feeling.[1]

Though these conclusions concerning the origin of sin in the race are recognized by Tennant to be somewhat inferential and theoretical in nature, despite our anthropological knowledge and analogies from contemporary savage life, he believes that the realm of empirical fact is entered when investigation of the origin of sin in the individual begins. The foundation, true of the individual as well as of the race, from which Tennant starts, is that men are natural before moral beings, the impulses of human nature being firmly established before any moral consciousness arises. Infants are held to be simply nonmoral animals, their impulses and propensities being essential to their nature, their experience first beginning on the sensory and affective level, with imagination and volition appearing sometime later, and with finally a rudimentary form of reflection and social morality beginning to dawn.[2] At first the infant

> "is a sentient automaton, adapted for parisitic dependence upon its environment. The intensity of the young child's appetite is, biologically, a sign of future health and vigour....Only one sanction is as yet known to the infant -- that of success; the knowledge of good and evil has not yet emerged. The formation, therefore, of the earliest habits is a nonmoral phenomenon".[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 93.
[2] Ibid., pp. 96-8.
[3] Lecture, "The Child and Sin", pp. 167-8, The Child and Religion, ed. Thomas Stephens.

Indeed, though the child has great capacity for learning and adaptation, he has among animal species the barest of ready-made endowments.[1] Such tendencies as the child does show are not only natural to his created nature, and neutral in character as to what may be made out of them, but in fact are organic necessities.

> "Fear and anger, envy and jealousy, self-centredness and self-pleasing are qualities which form part of the birthright of the human being in virtue of his animal ancestry....They are natural and normal and necessary. It cannot be said of them, when we speak with reference to man in his yet unmoralised condition, that in any sense 'they ought not to be'. They are nonmoral".[2]

These propensities are seen by Tennant to be the common ground of the good and bad. What the will does with them may become a matter of sinful conduct, but in themselves they are neutral in character: "they belong to man, as it has pleased God to make him, i.e., through evolutionary process".[3] In fact, he states that since we now believe in the evolutionary connection between the physical natures of man and the animals, we must also regard these propensities as inevitable survivals of the evolving course of Nature.[4] However, Tennant warns, even today many people allow themselves to speak carelessly of them as wicked, 'sinful appetites', thus perpetuating the age-old Manichaen dualism.[5]

Actually, Tennant asserts, the infant in following his impulses and instincts is entirely fulfilling his life's

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[1] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, pp. 98-9.
[2] Ibid., p. 101.
[3] Art., "Sin", p. 702, Encyclopaedia Brittanica, XX.
[4] Lecture, "The Child and Sin", op. cit., p. 167.
[5] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 103.

purpose, and certainly at first cannot in any way control them.[1] The infant is not responsible for the fact that they are deeply imbedded in us at birth, and no responsibility attaches to the fact that they continue to call for satisfaction even after the appearance of will and conscience.[2] Indeed, the infant for some time does not even know what he is doing. Later through instruction there begins a slow growth of knowledge of some law, and then conscience soon appears. This

> "law to which he has learned to bow from various motives, the child can neither anticipate nor understand. In his attempts to do so he often blunders. He finds, however, that his parents and teachers also obey it.... Some of the law's content is learned through suggestion and imitation, through instruction and reflection. And so there grows up for him a moral ideal which is taken over into himself....And it is continually revised and expanded throughout life. Thus in temptations the child begins to get accustomed to the presence in him of something which represents his father or some other law-giving personality. Much experience is necessary to separate the abstract idea of good and bad from that of the will of his parents. Good is, at first, what is permitted, and evil what is forbidden. But long before this separation of abstract from concrete has been effected, the new self that has thus arisen calls the child to account if he yields to his 'self of habit'. Here is conscience; and as it is being acquired one ceases to be innocent with the innocence of ignorance of good and evil".[3]

Thus, in Tennant's theory, "the Fall is exchanged for an animal origin and a subsequent superposition or acquisition of moral personality".[4] And this exchange in no way affects the doctrine of man's need for grace and redemption, he asserts. Man is as sinful as ever, because all have been observed to have fallen short of what they knew they ought to

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[1] Ibid., p. 105.
[2] Art., "Sin", op. cit., p. 702.
[3] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, pp. 108-9.
[4] Ibid., p. 114.

do. Consequently Tennant claims that his view neither excuses evil nor explains it away.[1] That the human heart produces great quantities of evil behaviour is an empirical fact which he does not deny, and he has no doubt that men definitely need redemption and forgiveness of sins. And he makes it clear that the universality of sinfulness is sufficient cause for the redemption of man, regardless of how sinfulness arose. To the doctrine of redemption, the question of the origin of sin is of no moment, and Jesus himself never spoke of sin in terms of its origin, but always only in terms of its presence and actuality.[2]

> "The worthiest view of the meaning of the Incarnation -- that which finds in it an absolute and eternal purpose of God -- utterly transcends all question of a Fall, and even the relation of Christ to human sin".[3]

He thinks that the universality of sin has, however, its sufficient explanation in the fact of the created animal nature of man, with its strongly implanted propensities which though neutral at birth become, by the time of the acquisition of conscious volition and morality, powerful drives, the overcoming of which is a life-long task set for every man. The universality of sinfulness is thus seen to be no marvel calling for unusual speculative explanation. And its universality becomes even more understandable, he claims, when it is remembered that

> "not only does widening experience bring increased opportunities of sinning and manifold more inducements to sin; but every fresh access of insight into the

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[1] Ibid., p. 112.
[2] Ibid., p. 152.
[3] Ibid., p. 153.

> inexhaustible content and demand of the Divine claim upon the heart and soul and mind and strength reveals new worlds within the self to be conquered; and failure at any stage is sin".[1]

This evident sinfulness of men has often, however, been confounded with an idea of original sin. The generality of sin is a fact, Tennant acknowledges, but he does not find it possible to hold that original sin is other than "an inference, an alleged, conjectural, explanation of the facts".[2]

That such a doctrine has been invoked is understandable though, he admits, for previous to the rise of evolutionary theories and of psychological investigations it was rather impossible for theologians to do otherwise than to correlate the impressive incidence of sinfulness with the idea of an hereditary corruption of a never questioned state of original righteousness.

> "But for us there has emerged an alternative view of man's original condition. What if he were flesh before spirit; lawless, impulse-governed organism, fulfilling as such the nature necessarily his and therefore the life God willed for him in his earliest age, until his moral consciousness was awakened to start him, heavily weighted with the inherited load, not, indeed, of abnormal and corrupted nature, but of non-moral and necessary animal instinct and self-assertive tendency, on that race-long struggle of flesh with spirit and spirit with flesh".[3]

As for scriptural references to the origin of sin, Tennant contends that we cannot look there for guidance concerning the historical beginnings of sin, even if we still believed that whatever we find in Scripture is unconditional truth. In fact, the conclusions of his lengthy investigation

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[1] The Concept of Sin, p. 270.

[2] Art., "Original Sin", p. 564, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, IX.

[3] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, pp. 10-11.

into The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin, are not even needed if one accepts the account presented by several sciences of the slow development of the race from crude and barely human beginnings. And, apart from the speculative nature of these doctrines, and their intrinsic difficulties, Tennant sees too much in the Genesis account of

> "the echoes of remotely prehistoric thought, elements borrowed from the ancient lore of other nations, human speculation on matters beyond the reach of human memory",

and, in any case, declares it invalid to look there for any a priori final or permanent truth concerning historical, psychological, or scientific problems.[1]

At any rate, the detailed argument of his historical survey is not important to the present thesis because there are few today who look to the Genesis account for an exact revelation of early events. For the most part those who hold to the doctrine of original sin do not base it upon Genesis, but rather upon the apparent bias toward evil that is exhibited in human behaviour. It is assumed that there is such a bias and that it is the result of a fall from an originally righteous nature, but no one professes to have historical knowledge, such as Genesis appears to offer, as to how the fall came about. The invalidity of deducing theology and metaphysics from scriptural statements whose import has to do with realms that are investigated by the various sciences is now widely recognized; consequently

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[1] Ibid., p. 146.

this survey is not of central importance to this thesis, inasmuch as its chief conclusion, that a historical fall of the race in its first parents is not a revealed fact,[1] is not nowadays widely or effectively contested.

St. Paul himself does not make clear how Adam's sin is connected with mankind's sinfulness, Tennant alleges, even assuming as possible the view that man was originally perfectly developed.[2]

The traditional doctrines of a Fall and Original Sin

Among most contemporary theologians the idea of original guilt is no longer retained and for this reason scarcely needs to be dealt with, but the conception of original sin is nevertheless generally held at the present time. Here, then, is encountered, Tennant notices,

> "the irreducible residue of the doctrine of the Fall and its effect upon the race: the doctrine that men are sinful not merely in that they have committed sinful acts, formed sinful habits, and established sinful characters, but also in the somewhat different sense that they inherit a nature which is rendered abnormal through privation, derangement or disturbance, and in which there is a bias towards evil prior to all voluntary sinful action".[3]

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1 "The view, according to which the early narratives of Genesis embody a record of a primitive revelation, preserved in purity by the Hebrews alone, has completely broken down in the light of the facts of the sciences (of modernity) -- e.g. man's extreme antiquity and rude primitive state, the gradual growth of his mental and moral nature, the existence of similar records amongst other races, whence the Hebrews partly borrowed theirs, and whose origin can be naturally accounted for". The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 27n.

2 Tennant approvingly quotes in this regard the following statement by Jowett, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 180: "How slender is the foundation in the New Testament for the doctrine of Adam's sin being imputed to his posterity! -- two passages in St. Paul at most, and these of uncertain interpretation". Ibid., p. 29

3 The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 22.

Apart from his rejection of the premises of the doctrines of the Fall and of Original Sin, Tennant finds four difficulties implicit in a view of corruption through a fall.

(1) A state of original righteousness must be assumed, a view which receives no support from any of the sciences, and in fact is contradicted by them.[1] Though Tennant believes that "what is original cannot be sin, and sin cannot be original",[2] he elsewhere develops at great length, as was previously shown, the psychology of the rise and growth of sin from man's neutral status of neither goodness or badness.

(2) Even granted original righteousness to be a fact, it is difficult to conceive the occurrence of a change from natural goodness to a sinful state. For if man was created morally righteous it is difficult to account for any urge to evil; and if at present actual sin is taken to presuppose in us a state of sinfulness, then Tennant wonders why the same presupposition would not be true of the first man, i.e., why man's first sin would not imply a sinful state rather than one of original righteousness.[3]

Sometimes in recent theology it has been asserted that a kind of mysterious pre-mundane fall occurred. But Tennant finds it even more impossible to conceive that man, as a pure spirit possessing no bodily motivations and no inheritance of physical drives, could have fallen from a state of

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[1] Ibid., p. 27.
[2] Art., "Original Sin", op. cit., p. 564.
[3] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 28.

original righteousness.[1] No motive is assignable for such a fall, and there can be no excuse such as frailty advanced.

> "For self-assertion in man as a mundane being, Nature had provided some motive, if no excuse; for self-assertion in a pure spirit in a celestial environment a motive...needs to be provided".[2]

And those who refer to a pre-mundane fall, Tennant insists, must of course assert that each man fell independently, because it would be completely immoral to assume that one man's fall caused the fall of everyone else. And with this recognition a fall becomes still more inconceivable, it being quite impossible to explain why a multitude of individuals should without exception go astray:

> "That all men, with no organic connexion between them, such as the evolutionary explanation indicates, should independently repeat the fall, no single one retaining his perfect integrity, which one would think it would be as natural to persist in as the straight line in which a moving body persists unless acted upon by an impressed force, is stupendously difficult to account for".[3]

In fact, it becomes increasingly difficult to account for the universality of sinfulness accordingly as we ascribe perfection to original man.[4] At any rate, we have no knowledge concerning such a life, and even if the soul at that time possessed moral volition, such volition must have been lost when the soul entered into this life, for psychology has not been able to trace volition and conscience back to the time of birth.[5]

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[1] Art., "Recent Theories as to the Cause of Universal Sinfulness", p. 503, Expository Times, XXXV.
[2] Ibid., p. 505.
[3] Ibid., p. 505.
[4] Ibid., p. 505.
[5] Art., "Sin", op. cit., p. 703.

(3) Further, it is difficult to understand that a single sinful act could disarrange the entire nature of man and upset his faculties. Certainly human experience provides no analogy to such an event.

> "The decisive single deeds which, we all know, can determine the after-course of a career and permanently blunt the sensibility of the moral faculty are not strictly parallel. For they are always but the final outcome and expression of gradually built-up character".[1]

(4) Finally, he asks, in view of the doubtful possibility of the transmission of acquired modifications, how could the consequences of the Fall upon the first parents be hereditarily transmitted? Actually, Tennant suggests, "the doctrine of an inherited corruption comes dangerously near to resolving sin into physical evil" insofar as it regards original sin as being propagated by natural generation.[2]

Concerning several objections

Tennant's theory has been objected to on the ground that it represents the moral as being a development out of the nonmoral. This objection, however, Tennant maintains, neglects to distinguish between evolution as preformation and its consequent unfolding, and the more proper conception of evolution as epigenesis. In epigenesis elements may be combined in such a way

> "that the resultant product or evolute now possesses properties which neither the internal nor the external element possesses severally....It can perfectly

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[1] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, pp. 28-9.
[2] Ibid., p. 38.

> well be the same, and indeed must be, in the development of the moral out of the nonmoral. The inborn impulses are nonmoral, the incipient will is nonmoralized; the fusion of the two to produce an act contrary to known law is, however a moral evolute".[1]

Again, sometimes it is held that sin is conscious rebellion against God, or even that it is a calculated preference for evil simply because it is evil. But Tennant believes that sin seldom reaches the level of deliberate hostility to God, or defiance of His authority,[2] even in its most advanced stages, and certainly not in its early stages.[3] Secondly, he finds it difficult to believe that people ever choose evil because it is evil. Evil is chosen because it seems to be attractive in itself:

> "Evil may be chosen in order to gratify ambition, or passion, or revenge, or spite; but it cannot be preferred because it is not preferable, persuasive because it is dissuasive, attractive because it is repulsive....Evil is indeed chosen with the knowledge that it is evil, and even with full awareness that it will afterward be followed by misery and other hateful consequences. But it is then chosen because it is for the time being pleasant, satisfying to some wants for desires that are immediately engrossing. It is never chosen <u>because</u> it is evil, but always <u>in spite of</u> its being evil".[4]

Further, it has been said of Dr. Tennant's theory that it minimizes the sinfulness of sin and/or explains it away; that, for example, it does not represent sin to be sin. It is Tennant's contention, however, that what is commonly called sinful is not rightly so called, and that it cannot be included under the category of 'sinfulness', nor, for that matter, any

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[1]Art., "Recent Theories as to the Cause of Universal Sinfulness", <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 506.
[2]<u>The Concept of Sin</u>, p. 255.
[3]<u>The Origin and Propagation of Sin</u>, p. 78.
[4]<u>The Concept of Sin</u>, p. 255.

> "conduct which either could not have been other than it was, or at least knew no moral reason why it should have been other than it was. If such conduct is correctly included under the term sin, then, truly, my theory calls sin not-sin. But it is the very kernel of my argument that such usage of the term sin is incorrect, and rests upon a confusion. It involves, in short, the dominion of the moral law over nonmoral agents".[1]

And herein lies the reductio ad absurdam, Tennant says, of assigning sin where there is no consciousness of a moral sanction, for it then becomes only logical to extend such a concept of sin to the inorganic world, to falling rocks, for example, as well as to innocent infants.[2] To an ethicist the sinfulness of an act depends upon whether or not the agent was aware that a moral standard was being violated, and the same act will differ completely to him, depending upon whether it occurred before or after the acquisition of such a standard. On the one hand, it will be comparable to the fall of an avalanche, and on the other hand, it will be "distinctly and definitely a sin".[3]

In fact, Tennant recognizes that the chief question in the entire matter is as to the definition of sin:

> "Indeed it would seem to be this divergence between my critics and myself, as to the proper definition of sin, that all the forms of the objection that I have unintentionally explained away, or that my theory is incompatible with essential and fundamental Christian doctrines, are ultimately to be traced".[4]

On his definition of sin, then, Tennant takes his

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[1] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. xxiii.
[2] Ibid., p. xxv.
[3] Ibid., p. xxvi.
[4] Ibid., p. xxvin.

stand. If his definition is incorrect, then in a real sense he has explained sin away, and there is still room for retaining a view of original sin. But if his definition, that sin is what we are accountable for, is correct, then it cannot be said that he has explained sin away, or minimized it, and consequently there cannot be any theory of original sin. The definition of sin, then, is the all-important question in Tennant's treatment of the nature of sin.

Further on it may be seen that the very means by which he substantiates his theodicy, if correct, seems to confirm the validity of rejecting theories of original sin. He holds that God's chief purpose in the world is to develop moral personality, this emphasis being the key point in his theodicy of both moral and physical evil. If this is so, it appears to reinforce his views on the nature of sin, for if God desired to develop moral personalities it would only have been necessary for Him to have started men on a level appropriate for a subsequent acquisition and development of moral character. It would have been superfluous for Him to have created men perfect, and then to have allowed them by themselves to fall to the appropriate level. In any case, the significant point now is the importance of Tennant's theories concerning sin, at least as a background, to his theodicy. To what degree and in what ways his theodicy stands or falls with his concept of sin will be brought out in a later chapter, as well as, incidentally, to what extent his theodicy, if taken to be valid, contributes to the substantiation of his theory concerning,

especially, the origin of sin.

It has been necessary to make the exposition of this part of Dr. Tennant's thought somewhat lengthier than will be the exposition of his theodicy, inasmuch as it is an especially unusual position he maintains concerning sin, and because more controversy doubtless obtains in this respect than in the case of his theodicy.

Chapter III: Theodicy

Introductory

Tennant recognizes at the outset that the existence of evil is obviously a graver problem for theism than for other philosophical world-views because of the theistic insistence upon the unquestionable goodness of the all-powerful will of God.

An empirical theist such as Tennant, who takes his start from the evident fact of the presence of evil in the world, does not find it possible to take comfort in resorting to the idea that evil is illusion and appearance, occasioned by the inability of finite persons to see *sub specie aeternitatis*. This and kindred suppositions are held by him to be actually no explanation of the problem at all,

> "For, if evil is illusion, the illusion is an evil; and if no evil would confront timeless vision, it is an evil that we see *sub specie temporis*".[1]

And, if we view evil as unreal or illusory, then, says Tennant, we have entirely renounced experience as the foundation of knowledge, for if there is anything real in our experience it is the actuality of suffering.[2]

He asserts that it is incumbent upon the theist to demonstrate that the world does not contain "absolute and superfluous evils", and that if the problem of the existence of evil can be solved on an intellectual basis, it

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[1] *Philosophical Theology*, II, p. 181.

[2] *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, p. 137.

will not be necessary to base our hope for the future solely on our faith in a divine love whose choice of historical means may be somewhat beyond our understanding.[1]

In the first chapter some mention was made of Tennant's usage of the term 'best possible world'. He holds, of course, that God is a determinate Being, not an indeterminate Absolute in whom all differences are lost: in that God is love, for example, He is not malevolent, and in that He has willed a developing moral order, He has not willed a creation of perfected spirits.[2] The nature of the world is what it is because God is what He is.[3] If God had created a different world, He would be a God different from the one we have some revelation of:

> "A God who might have 'chosen' a different seminal world from this, or different 'primary collocations', would be a different God".[4]

We are not to think of God as having been confronted with various possibilities for worlds, independent of Himself: 'unrealized possibilities', in this sense, are 'impossibilities'. What is possible for God is determined by His nature, not by any prius of law, and His determinateness excludes all incompatible so-called possibilities. Actually, Tennant claims, the human mind imagines possibilities in abstraction from actualities that it knows, and tends to conceive of them as independent of actualities.[5]

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[1] Philosophical Theology, II, 185.
[2] Art., "The Problem of the Existence of Moral Evil", p. 82, Elements of Pain and Conflict in Human Life, Cambridge Lectures.
[3] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 184.
[4] Ibid., p. 183.
[5] Ibid., p. 183.

It has been suggested, Tennant notices, that God might have chosen a different world than this one; He might, for example, have chosen one which involved no pains and evils for man. But Tennant questions such a view on the ground that it would hardly be compatible with the world being a cosmos, and that it would not provide for the realization of moral values.[1]

Dr. Tennant thinks it a superfluous question to ask why God created a world at all, because he means by God, the 'world-ground'; and he says that it is possible to reply to the question why an evolutionary world rather than a perfected one, by maintaining that if God were to realize the good he had to create finite spirits amid a world framework of evolutionary development.[2] And he asserts that since theism teaches that the world-ground is a God of love, it must also teach that "in some sense, the world is the 'best possible' of its kind".[3] Of course, by 'best' Tennant means instrumentality to the realization of moral values, rather than mere pleasantness. Happiness may be an important element in the final consummation of things but it is not the primary purpose of human activity, and, in fact, man at his best has realized this to be true:

> "The 'best possible' world...the world that is worthiest of God and man, must be a moral order, a theatre of moral life and love".[4]

And, concerning the term 'possible', Tennant reaffirms

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[1] Ibid., p. 184.
[2] Ibid., p. 185.
[3] Ibid., p. 186.
[4] Ibid., p. 186.

that it is improper to speak of any prius of independent possibilities, and that God having once constituted actuality is not to be regarded as having control alike over the possible and impossible.[1]

Tennant wishes to make it clear, however, that though God is of a determinate nature, and, in a sense, is thereby limited[2] by His very recognition of truths of thought and being, there was not a time when such laws of thought, etc., were apart from Him.[3] The sum of eternal truth is "the mode of God's being and activity, and is neither their prius nor product".[4] Elsewhere, in fact, Tennant indicates anxiety to dissociate his theistic view from the deistic idea that the world upon being created is self-sufficiently maintained, and from the view that the laws of nature are to be considered as independent existents like the ule of the Greeks. Rather does he see in these laws the "regularly but freely acting power of the Governor of the universe".[5]

A corollary of the fact, Tennant holds, that God has committed Himself to a definite plan of action concerning the cosmos and man, and which will be brought out more clearly further on, is that much that happens in the world is of an incidental nature and does not necessarily express

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[1] Ibid., p. 187.

[2] "Such self-limitation is to be regarded as itself the outcome of the divine will and not an inner necessity of His own Being and Life", The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 135.

[3] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 187.

[4] Ibid., p. 188.

[5] Essay, "The Being of God, in the Light of Physical Science", Cambridge Theological Essays, pp. 96-7.

His direct purpose. Tennant is careful to emphasize "the incidental nature of much that happens in God's world, and from which teleological import is excluded".[1]

Moral Evil

Having affirmed that God must be a determinate being, and be directing a developing moral order, it follows, says Tennant, that in such a world there must be the possibility and risk of moral evil. If there is to be moral goodness in persons, they had to be created capable of sinning, for it is only when it is possible for men to go wrong that it is also possible for them to grow in character and develop in moral stature. God did not intend men to be as clocks, for goodness which is automatic can not strictly be called moral. He intended them to be free agents, with a capacity to choose the lower good instead of the higher, so that their decisions, when directed to the higher goods of life, would be the result of moral freedom rather than the excellent behaviour of a puppet or 'sentient automaton'. The high point of the best possible world is the moral agent, not the puppet.[2]

> "It is idle, then, wistfully to contemplate the happiness which the world might have known had its creator made us capable only of what is right....There is no moral goodness in a clock, however perfectly it may keep time. Freedom to do good alone, except after suppression of lower motives by moral conflict, is not freedom".[3]

A best world, then, is comprised of free persons with

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[1] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 133.
[2] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 188.
[3] Ibid., pp. 188-9.

a measure of delegated autonomy, with such freewill, if it is genuine, opening the way to new possibilities determined in scope by the degree of conferred freedom. And thus though God created man with certain capacities for free decision and creativity He is not to be viewed as directly responsible for the use made of this freedom. Tennant holds that the fundamental motivations toward the wrong are inevitable, nonmoral or morally neutral, consequences of the evolutionary process which God is putting men through, but that it is nevertheless conceivable that moral evil might not have emerged. Sin is actually the result of our freedom, a misuse of that for which we are responsible. Thus

> "for the possibility of moral evil entering into this moral order, God, who foreknew it, is responsible: He permits, so to say, the evil in order that there may be good. But for the actual emergence of man's moral evil we cannot say that He is responsible: our sin, when 'sin' is strictly and correctly defined, is not God's act but the product of our volition, or devolved freedom".[1]

And, even if it is maintained that because God is the cause of those who cause moral evil he is therefore its ultimate cause, no further problem is presented, Tennant declares, for the reason that the highest good which God wills cannot be achieved without the permission of evils along the way.[2] And it must be remembered, he affirms, that the fulfillment of the divine purpose in its entirety may very well involve temporary defeats in particular cases.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 189.

[2] Art., "The Problem of the Existence of Moral Evil", p. 519 Expository Times, XXX.

[3] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 140.

Some object that, inasmuch as God on the theistic theory stamped each soul with specific capacities and characteristics, such a theodicy is invalid, assuming that because God created men he also necessarily created all volitional consequences. According to Tennant, however, this objection maintains its force only on the conception that the will is a machinelike entity, and disregards the view that man was not foreordained merely to proceed through a specific set of actions. The results of free will are neither the creative acts of God or the mechanically ordered functions of man. More properly,

> "freewill consists in subjective activities of a plastic person, in directivity of assigned capacities, etc., in choice and transvaluation, in selective distribution of attention such as determines the strengths of motives...".[1]

He sees that the possession of freewill by human beings is at once their burden and their glory, their liberty and their responsibility, and that they could not have it merely the one way or the other, inasmuch as if there is to be morality for man there must be struggle and conflict, and the opportunity to do moral evil.[2]

He then notices that a strange combination of criticisms has frequently been leveled at theism in respect to the presence of moral and physical evil in the world; namely, some object to moral evil on the ground that there is too much contingency in the world, and others object to physical evil on the ground that there is too much regularity.

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[1] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 190.
[2] Ibid., p. 190.

> "As they stand, these objections cancel one another; and the theist's reply to them is that neither the contingency in the human realm nor the uniformity in the physical realm is a superfluity, but both are essential conditions of moral life".[1]

To the suggestion that God could or should intervene at times to effect a variation in these conditions, Tennant again says that, though such interventions might shelter us from temptation and lead to correct conduct, such rightness and correctness would not be of any moral value. The growth of morality may not be an unbroken progressive ascension, but for God to force it along such lines would amount to a renunciation of the moral plan.[2] Thus the supposition that the existence or sin is a barrier to theodicy must, he contends, ground its objection either upon the idea that to God there is no difference between the possible and the impossible, or the view that the best possible world is not a moral order but one of 'happiness'. And if the moral order is the finest and best plan a world can embody, then despite any incidental evils, the only means by which the best world may be attained is also good. In fact, Tennant holds, the theistic philosophy, by virtue of its emphasis upon the realization of moral values, as being the world's purpose, 'requires' that the world be an imperfect, developing order rather than a nonmoral static one.[3]

As yet only God's purpose has been considered, but Tennant also believes that a theodicy must show that man in some sense accepts God's ideal as his own, i.e., man

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[1] Ibid., p. 190.
[2] Ibid., p. 190.
[3] Ibid., p. 191.

must recognize and appropriate the ideal as a personal end and not acquiesce in it merely because it strives toward a goal which is the will of the divine. The will of God must be done not simply because it is the will of God, but because that will is seen to be the finest ideal man could strive for. In fact, Tennant realizes, men at their best have seen the wisdom in the divine plan of growth through struggle, have agreed that the prize is worth the cost, and in general are glad that they are above the merely brute level of nonmorality.[1] This latter emphasis is important because he holds that a theodicy must establish the reasonableness of the view that life is worth the troubles which we are faced with, and that though we are surely born to trouble, "the glory of living is worth the cost".[2] If the things of the spirit and of moral endeavor are the finest things in life, then, Tennant reaffirms, there can be no doubt that the best world is one which provides for the acquisition of those things. Indeed, had mankind never arrived on the evolutionary scene, and had the world's process leveled off before the appearance of rational and moral creatures, it is more than likely that "the world's falling short of being a moral order would have remained unregretted and unapproved".[3] As long as men can feel, Tennant states, that the cost of living nobly and of learning love is inevitable and is not superfluous to a moral order, then they can approve of and find inspiration in God's ideal.

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[1] Ibid., p. 192.
[2] Art., "The Problem of Suffering", p. 100, Elements of Pain and Conflict in Human Life.
[3] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 192.

A theodicy must further show, says Tennant, that moral evil is not in the long run unsurmountable or unconquerable. It is first noticed by him, in this regard, that the history of mankind shows an unmistakeable trend of moral growth, though it is an advance which from time to time has been interrupted, and if it cannot from this fact be concluded that the progress will continue, he asserts, it is also not to be supposed that such gains as have thus far been acquired may be 'permanently reversed'. Tennant rejects several views which have been advanced at various times with the intention of safequarding the ultimate victory of good over evil: (1) that the contingencies of history are overruled by an absolute dialectic process, (2) that progress is inevitable, an intrinsic characteristic of the world's process, (2) that God will at the proper time reduce all evil and freewill in order to preserve the good, (4) that the measure of progress that has thus far been achieved implies future progress, and (5) that someday men will lose all desire for the evil. After all this is affirmed, however, Tennant yet thinks that there are several reasons for believing that evil will not ultimately conquer the good.[1]

One reason he finds in the intrinsic natures of good and evil themselves, quite independently of contingency and freedom. Goodness is seen to be characteristically self-conserving, while evil in itself is self-destroying;[2] and they possess these intrinsic qualities by virtue of the very nature of God, i.e., because God is what He is, goodness and

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[1] Ibid., pp. 193-4.
[2] Ibid., p. 194.

evil are what they are.[1] And, accordingly, the victories of evil over good have great difficulty in consolidating themselves:

> "Evil desires and evil purposes conflict with one another, so that evil as well as goodness resists and thwarts conspiration in evil. On the other hand, conquests in goodness and truth, despite their temporary obscuration, when once made are made for ever. The world always has knowledge that it is the better for them. There is a unity of aim, a co-operation in purpose, a solidarity of interest, a growing consensus, amongst men of goodwill. The moral law, in spite of its continual violation, survives and increases its dominion: the good is self-conservative".[2]

Again, moral goodness is sometimes consequent upon the occurrence of badness, while evil is not produced by goodness. There have been many instances in which good results have ensued from bad actions, and cases in which good has been extracted from a bad situation, even sometimes to the extent of transmuting the evil. "Error exposes itself, to the further elucidation and definition of the truth: evil, in its very acquisition, reveals itself to be the lesser good, and learns by bitter experience that it is evil".[3] Further, there is the element of social inheritance. To-day's generation profits from the gains and acquisitions of moral insight and refinement which have been slowly developed during the centuries, and it is not as though each person had to begin alone at the bottom to learn and to discipline himself, for there is an accumulation of social experience which provides wisdom and guidance to the individual; and as more and more persons incline toward the good, it

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[1] Art., "Divine Omnipotence", p. 36, Expository Times, XXXI.
[2] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 194.
[3] Ibid., p. 194.

accordingly becomes increasingly difficult for the plans of the wicked to be realized.[1]

Then for these reasons it is seen by Tennant that casual optimism is not the only view which can claim a final victory of the good. And, he surmises, it may even be that in the future the rule of goodness will proceed with even greater speed, for, in a sense, the rise of the good is a cumulative process. At any rate, Tennant states, there is no reason why we should believe that moral evil is destined to an ultimate triumph over the good, any more than there was reason to believe that its existence is incompatible with a moral world.

> "The tendencies inherent in goodness and badness, as such, preclude the possibility that the purpose of a self-limited God, supposing it to include the final victory of goodness over evil, should be defeated by the freedom of His creatures".[2]

Some have asked, Tennant acknowledges, whether or not moral evil will ever disappear entirely, and if it may not always exist even when brought under control. Such a question is not, however, he thinks, of central relevance to a theodicy whose theism makes no pretentions to insight into knowledge of the after-life beyond adducing reasons for belief in such a life. Though theism believes that God is love, it cannot thereby submit reasons for asserting that present history is but a preparation for the final consummation which will preclude the possibility of anything evil.[3] Indeed, theism is not required to affirm any of the

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[1] Ibid., p. 195.
[2] Ibid., p. 195.
[3] Ibid., p. 195.

doctrines of universal hope, individual perfection, or ultimate destruction of the unrighteous, in preference to each other. And even if there should be continued active conflict of good and evil in the next world, theism is not thereby faced with a difficulty more burdensome than the presence of moral evil in this world.[1]

Then again, he recognizes, some have taken to the other extreme in holding that the fullest use of the divine love will forever require the continued existence of sinful creatures, with reality in this conception being forever characterized by the overcoming of evil. Unlike the former notion, this view is seen to represent a prejudice against the changeless and perfected, and to appreciate the process and progress rather than a conceivable goal. However, Tennant thinks that such an alternative is scarcely demanded by the conclusion that the realization of a moral world includes at least the possibility if not the actuality of evil, for it may be, he says, that the maintenance and furtherance of goodness in a future world is not in any way dependent upon the existence of evil. Indeed, human experience furnishes an illustration to the contrary in what has been called 'the saint's rest', or "the relative freedom from moral conflict and from temptation, earned by self-discipline and struggle",[2] and this rest may then have an abiding value and satisfaction of its own quite apart from whether or not the conditions which first provoked and stimulated it are maintained. In any case, Tennant expects

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[1] Ibid., p. 196.
[2] Ibid., p. 196.

that both these speculations will readily be seen to be irrelevant to the main tasks of theodicy.[1]

Thus the problem of evil in its aspect of moral evil must, he insists, be confronted with the philosophy that in this 'best possible' world all things, seen not in each particular, but as a whole, work together for the greatest good. Tennant does not wish to maintain that everything that happens is good, or that things are good simply because they happen, or that evil is any the less evil because it serves a good purpose in the world as a whole. And he is eager to discredit the assumption that all particular evils occur toward some particular good, or are as musical dissonances in the harmony of the whole.

> "When it is asserted that all things work together for good, by 'all things' is not meant each and every single thing, but the sum of things regarded as one whole or complex, the universe as a coherent order".[2]

Tennant believes that this theodicy concerning moral evil is the natural outcome of the doctrine of sin which he maintains, though, to be sure, not necessarily a view developing alone from his theory of sin, and only hopes that the theodicy is a further vindication of his theory of sin.[3]

Physical Evil

The above quoted general view is taken by Tennant to be the most appropriate context for the facing of that aspect of the problem of evil which cannot safely be attributed to the responsible actions of human freedom, namely,

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[1] Ibid., p. 197.
[2] Ibid., p. 197.
[3] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 141.

physical evil, the sufferings of sentient beings brought about by the processes of nature.

The resolution of the oft-stated puzzle as to the power and goodness of God seemingly working at cross purposes does not, Tennant thinks, need to involve a demonstration that every particular painful instance that occurs in the world is the means to a particular end, or to some providential purpose. Indeed, such a procedure is held to be "both superfluous and insufficient".[1] It is to a certain extent true, he thinks, to say that pain is "sometimes stimulating, educational, preventitive, or remedial", but such affirmations do not cover the entire problem. And it is only of slight help to argue that we sometimes exaggerate our pains. Then again it is clear that differences in the intensity of pleasures is sufficient to make one pleasure more appreciated than another, without recourse to the view that pain makes pleasure more enjoyable. And all such particular instances as illustrated in the statement that the knife is necessary to cure the disease are seen only to touch the edge of the problem when one asks about the necessity of the disease. Thus, the essential problem is deeper than these particular instances and situations indicate. Tennant, in fact, believes that theism must demonstrate

> "that pain is either a necessary by-product of an order of things requisite for the emergence of the higher goods, or an essential instrument to organic evolution, or both".[2]

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[1] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 197.

[2] Ibid., p. 198.

And unless it can be shown that this is the case with pain and suffering, it cannot reasonably be held, he maintains, that the world is not poorly arranged and clumsily managed. Thus it is seen that Tennant maintains that it is necessary to show that the non-existence of pain would be incongruous with the nature of God, inasmuch as suffering is the natural result of a developing moral order, God's best possible world,[1] that, in fact, it must be established that suffering is a 'logically necessary' outcome of an order aiming at moral development.[2]

The latter alternative, that pain is an essential instrument to organic evolution, appears to Tennant to be especially relevant to the question of the lower animals. Their suffering is not incidental to the evolutionary process but materially aids organic process, and

> "it renders unnecessary a large amount of inheritance of specialised structure and function, and so prevents the suppression of plasticity; and, as the 'sensitive edge' turned towards danger, or as prophylactic, it is of value for organic progressiveness. Although evil, it is also good for something".[3]

The former alternative, that pain is a necessary 'by-product', will have to be invoked, he thinks, in order to explain that dimension of human suffering which so often appears to serve no good purpose; for some men have it in them to meet suffering patiently and courageously, and they will not be better men for having done so. And it would be a crude Divinity, Tennant contends, who would appoint them

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[1] Art., "The Problem of Pain and Suffering", p. 474, Expository Times, XXX.
[2] Art., "The Problem of Suffering", op. cit., p. 100.
[3] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 199.

sufferings merely in order to convert their potentialities into actualities. He argues that suffering is an inevitable accompaniment to a developing moral order, a necessary though incidental outcome of a determinate world which exists as a habitation for rational and moral life, and maintains that the problem of physical evil will be solved if it can be demonstrated that the suffering which we experience is not superfluous to the determinate cosmos, even though it may seem that specific pains are often out of proportion to any particular purposes we can conceive might be fulfilled by them.[1]

The regularity of nature Tennant holds to be the point of departure for meeting this problem, for he thinks that if the world is to be a moral order it must be an order chiefly characterized by regularity and law-abidingness, this law-abidingness being an indispensable precondition to a realm suitable for moral life.[2] It is, in fact, because of physical regularity that it is possible for man to make predictions, to plan, to reflect, to form habits, to accumulate experience, and to develop character and intellectual faculties. These remarks will perhaps readily be granted, Tennant observes, but he believes that they have often been neglected in considerations of the problem of suffering. In emphasizing, then, the framework of a rational cosmos as a setting for the development of morality, the uniformity of law being indispensable, that is,

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[1] Ibid., p. 199.
[2] Ibid., p. 199.

once granting the necessity of a constant world as the only suitable place for moral growth, it is improper, Tennant stresses, to expect particular situations to yield consequences incongruous with the general pattern of events. The reign of law, even though it entails suffering, inasmuch as "we cannot have the advantages of a determinate order of things without its logically or its causally necessary disadvantages", is necessary if the highest goods in life are to be realized.[1] And though we may not be able to assign any particular purpose to earthquakes and pestilence, they are nevertheless products of the same system of things which on the whole is suitable to the maintenance of life and health.[2]

Any particular disadvantages which accrue are not to be considered as the direct will of God, Tennant says, but are to be regarded as inevitable concomitants of the general plan. God's will operates in respect to these particular events antecedently, but not consequently, i.e., they are not in themselves desired, but are permitted because the antecedently willed moral order could not have been had without them.[3]

In order to will a moral order God had to commit himself to a determinate plan of procedure, thus at once ruling out other possible methods. At this point, Tennant approvingly quotes Martineau in regard to the latter's conception of a cosmic equation which entails the consequent

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[1] Ibid., p. 200.
[2] Essay, "The Being of God, in the Light of Physical Science", op. cit., p. 96.
[3] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 200.

working out of results compatible only with the values of its roots,[1] then proceeds to elaborate this idea:

> "If two consequences follow from a system of propositions, or two physical properties are involved in a configuration of particles, we cannot have the one without the other, though the one may be pleasing or beneficial to man and the other may be painful, or in its immediate effects hurtful. And such a result by no means implies lack of benevolence or of power on the part of the Creator, so long as power does not include inconsistency or indeterminateness. It simply bespeaks the inexorableness of logic, the compatibility of things, and the self-consistency of the Supreme Being".[2]

Tennant adduces the example of water (its capacity to drown us as well as to benefit us) in this connection. Its specific gravity, freezing-point, thirst-quenching and cleansing functions, are all necessary constituent parts of it. Water cannot have only the one set of qualities, and therefore it is impossible to have water which will only be of benefit to men, or to have removed the qualities that are sometimes detrimental. Determinateness of nature excludes certain associations of elements, and includes others, and we cannot have it only one way. Thus, physical ills and goods both result from the determinate plan which seeks an appropriate setting for intelligent and moral life.[3] That there could be a determinate world providing at once for the comfort of man and for his education and growth in morality is a view which Tennant leaves to the objectors to theism to demonstrate.

This being true, it must then follow, Tennant claims,

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[1] Ibid., p. 201.
[2] Ibid., p. 201.
[3] Ibid., p. 201.

that any particular evils which thus occur cannot be considered 'absolute or superfluous'. These evils are not absolute inasmuch as they are subservient to an order which is good for the development of moral personality, and they are not superfluous inasmuch as they are inevitable incidents to that order.[1] They issue from a system which, regarded as a whole, ministers to the highest good. To be sure, they are not good from the hedonic standpoint, but they are good from the standpoint of a higher conception of the good.[2] It is, in fact, Tennant recognizes, precisely from the hedonistic viewpoint that the many indictments of the world as bad spring.[3]

And to the suggestion that God could or should interfere with the process, Tennant rejoins that as God could hardly fashion moral beings without making them free and subject to temptations, so he could scarcely have ordained a moral order which was not at the same time a physical order. And only by foregoing the determinate world-plan and its moral order and regularity could God prevent such consequences as earthquakes and pestilence. Some changes might conceivably be made without renouncing the cosmos, but nothing to the degree which would be required for the suspension of suffering in general:

> "Physical evil, then, must necessarily be. And the goodness of God is vindicated if there be no reason to believe that the world-process involves more misery than Nature's uniformity entails."[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 201.
[2] Ibid., p. 202.
[3] Art., "The Problem of Pain and Suffering", op. cit., p. 473.
[4] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 202.

Elsewhere Tennant summarizes that the absence of these evils from "a world such as ours" is an impossibility in two respects: (1) it would be incompatible with physical order, and therefore (2) incompatible with the production and maintenance of reason and morality.[1]

Tennant strongly maintains, however, that this theodicy does not suppose that every particular pain is the directly purposed will of God, or that any of the specific forms of suffering thrust on man such as tetanus and cancer are antecedently willed by God as means to particular ends. Indeed many pains are seen by him to be obviously out of proportion to the human situations in which they occur, and holds that it is impossible upon observation of sufferings and circumstances to retain the view of providence which regards suffering in each case to be relevant to a specific purpose or need.[2] A long quotation is here given because of its masterful summarization of the most important difficulties involved in the problem of evil:

> "It can be admitted that excruciating pains are more severe than they need be for evoking virtues such as patience and fortitude, and that to assign them to God's antecedent will would be to attribute devilishness to the Deity. Moreover, the fact that some human beings are born as abortions, as imbecile or insane, seems to be inexplicable on the view that every form of suffering is a particular providence, or an antecedently willed dispensation for educating and spiritually perfecting the person on whom the affliction falls; while to suppose that suffering is inflicted on one person for the spiritual edification of another is again to conceive of God as immoral. But the hardest fact of all for human equanimity, in presence of physical and mental evil, is that the apportionment of suffering among individuals is entirely irreconcilable by us with any divine plan of

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[1]Art., "The Problem of Suffering", op. cit., p. 107.
[2]Philosophical Theology, II, p. 203.

> adjustment of particular afflictions to the particular needs, circumstances, and stages of moral development, of individual sufferers. Even more distressing to human thought than the goading intensity of some kinds of pain is the seemingly chaotic distribution of human ills. If we could trace the utility of particular sufferings with their varying degrees of endurableness, or discern any adaptation of pain to the person's sensibility, moral state, and need of awakening or chastening, then philosophy might be able to agree with the simple-minded piety which assigns a special purpose to every instance of suffering, and finds therein the visitation or appointment of an all-wise and all-good God. But the wind is not tempered to the shorn lamb; the fieriest trials often overtake those who least need torments to inspire fear, to evoke repentance, or to perfect patience, and also those who, through no fault of their own, lack the mature religious faith and moral experience by which alone they could understand how afflictions may be endured for their souls' good".[1]

And in concluding these observations Tennant approves the view that 'all things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked', regardless of whether or not they will be able to profit by the trial.[2]

And, he believes, such facts cannot be incorporated into philosophical systems which hold to a degree of immanence extremer than that of the theism which recognizes a measure of autonomy in the created world.[3] In this 'wider theodicy', much of human suffering is regarded not as being directly willed by God for its own sake or for any purpose, but as an inevitable incidental 'by-product' of the regularity of the physical world.

> "The world is none the less God's world for its callousness to man; but its autonomy, not the particular incidence of each single ill, is what the religious should attribute to His 'appointment'".[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 203.
[2] Ibid., p. 203.
[3] Ibid., p. 203.
[4] Ibid., p. 204.

In regard to his theodicy in general Tennant thinks that it is more correct to view a great deal of what happens in the world as 'incidental' rather than 'teleological'.[1] He holds to this distinction because he believes that "if every physical happening is directly caused by God and reveals his nature, that nature cannot be benevolent".[2]

Another primary recognition in Tennant's theodicy is that man is at least an end in himself. Man, he avows, does not have to regard his sufferings merely as a means to the ultimate fulfillment of history, or the perfecting of the race, or to the realization of some divine purpose, or the manifestation of the 'glory' of God. The sufferings which each individual undergoes are justifiable only upon the consideration that any long-run benefits which may ensue belong to the individual himself, not merely to humanity, or God. Fortunately, Dr. Tennant notices, many have come to see the relevance of the divine plan to their lives and aspirations, and thus share God's ideal as a personal ideal. At any rate, we must feel that God is not only fulfilling us for Himself but also individually for ourselves, for it is only this that gives full meaning and worthwhileness to life.[3] If the individual's sufferings remain uncompensated for, or are not justified by the end result, even though the world be the best possible for humanity in general or for God, those sufferings "will for

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[1] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 141.
[2] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 214.
[3] Ibid., p. 204.

ever be a blot on the whole plan of the universe": there must be a balance of the good over the evil in each life, regardless of whether the good in general outweighs the evil, if the individual is an end in himself rather than a mere means to some other end.[1]

The doctrine of immortality, inevitable to a theory of divine love, is seen by him to give a new perspective to the problem of evil. The doctrine does not of course thereby assert that man's sufferings in this world are any the less evil because of some future compensation, but it affirms that worldly calamities take on a different aspect when viewed from the standpoint that this world is but the beginning of the way for mankind. Like St. Paul, Tennant is convinced that 'the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed'. This life has a certain intrinsic value and worthwhileness in itself, and is not merely something to be compensated for in a future life. Thus Tennant's theism and theodicy affirm that even in this life with all its ills we can see something of the purpose of God as being motivated by love, and consequently we do not merely have to resign ourselves to present sufferings, or to refrain from criticizing them, just because there is a future life which will square everything.[2]

Tennant sees a further difficulty for a theodicy that builds upon the foundation of the Christian faith. The fact that faith itself can be tried needs to be explained,

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[1] Art., "The Problem of Suffering", op. cit., p. 114.
[2] Philosophical Theology, II, p. 205.

he thinks, to those who see in this event another aspect of the problem of evil. In view of the small amount of definite knowledge which man has of the ways of God, that faith itself -- the very means by which man can feel himself to be in close relationship with the Divine, and which must be steady and constant if he is to cope successfully with life and to produce effective service, not to mention its importance in maintaining peace of mind -- is tried by God is exceedingly confounding to some. The excellent qualities of human life are not easy to acquire even when faith is unclouded, and therefore that this one means to heavenly light may be jeopardized by many of the events and influences which occur seems to many to be irreconcilable with the theistic conception of God.[1]

Of course, Tennant notices, the nature of faith itself, in that it is not sight, supplies the trial, especially in times when increasing scientific and ethical knowledge clears away beliefs once indisputably held as certainties and now recognized to be invalid. Thus the difficulty involved in this discussion is seen to be essentially the question, why, if God's purpose is communion between his creation and Himself, is not knowledge rather than faith allowed us?[2]

Two points are made by him with respect to this difficulty. First, if the genuineness of human freedom, and the reality of the quest for truth is to be maintained, God will not impinge upon mankind too closely, or allow a

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[1] Ibid., p. 206.
[2] Ibid., p. 207.

possibility of direct vision of Himself. As he had concluded that too much attraction in goodness would falsify the ethical freedom of man, he likewise holds that too much vouchsafed knowledge of God would eliminate the need for searching out the divine mysteries:

> "The formation (as contrasted with the fruition) of character, and the winning of truth by truth-seeking (as contrasted with the passive imbibing of ready-made infallibilities), require an invisible rather than a visible or demonstrable God, a partial revelation rather than a beatific vision, a divine co-operation rather than a divine overwhelming".[1]

Further, Tennant thinks that it must also be remembered in this connection that this world far from exhausting our life only begins it, and that this is important to remember because it throws new light on our failures in this world. What we fail to accomplish here becomes comparatively insignificant, especially if God is more concerned with what we do with what we have, than as to how much we achieve. The achievements and defeats of this life must be seen from the perspective of a beyond, instead of as sui generis absolute, for it is with growth that God is primarily concerned rather than with ready-made perfections.[2]

> "All aspiration that is here unrealized, all tasks remaining unaccomplished when death cuts us off, all baffled search, honest doubt, and faith that has been shipwrecked while men of goodwill and pure heart have worked in half-light or shadow, may be fulfilled in the life beyond".[3]

And so Tennant deals with this problem similarly as with the problem of evil in general. That faith must

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[1] Ibid., p. 207.
[2] Ibid., p. 208.
[3] Ibid., p. 208.

necessarily be tried, even though if just for the here and now, is not to say that it is thereby less a trial, any more than that evil is to be regarded as less evil because it is necessary now. And when is coupled the remembrance that this life is not the whole of eternity, with the recognition that the purpose of the world would not be truly ethical if this were the only life, Tennant thinks that this puzzle concerning the trial of faith may be resolved.

> "The facts which suggest a theistic interpretation of the world also suggest that in this life our seeking rather than our finding is God's purpose for us: question and counter-question, intercourse and dialogue, rather than full light and certain knowledge. The risks attending faith are not fatal, while they are conditions of the ethico-religious status in the life that now is".[1]

Thus, Tennant, in his theodicy as a whole, claims that though the problem of evil exists primarily if not solely for theism which believes God to be at once all-powerful and good, theism is the only view which turns the problem around and actually assigns a meaning to the sufferings of this time.[2] They are not merely unfortunate events which have to be patiently borne, or for which we can see no reason, but they are parts of a general system whose main purpose is to contribute to the formation of morality and character.

In view of these affirmations and his general treatment of evil as being what it is because the nature of the world is what it is, and the world what it is because God

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[1] Ibid., p. 208.
[2] Ibid., p. 181.

is what He is, it seems strange to find Tennant make the statement in a journal book review that "an adequate and ultimate...'rigid philosophic', solution of the problem of evil is impossible".[1] In any case, he does not even in this context elaborate upon this statement, and does not imply it elsewhere in his treatment of theodicy.

It may be possible, however, to show in a further chapter that such is actually the case with the problem of evil, and that it is not quite necessary or desirable to make physical evil an inevitable by-product of a certain given cosmos; but that God is in no sense merely resigned to the natural law he has created, and actually desires it for our own good. In the latter case, what we now call evil is rather something we do not understand than something God could not, in its excesses, prevent, if He was to have a world suitable for the rise and growth of moral character.

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[1] Journal of Theological Studies, XXI, p. 360.

Chapter IV: Criticism of Tennant's Views on Sin

Dr. Tennant's view concerning the origin of sin has been criticized by several as making sin merely an evolutionary carry-over, the result of the survival in us of animal impulses and appetites which were once useful to the lower creatures. And it has been felt that in doing so Tennant has reduced sin to an evolutionary anachronism, thereby to a degree excusing it.

This objection, however, does not strike the center of the problem, for Tennant strongly emphasizes that though sin is partially made possible by virtue of the existence of these impulses and appetites which, to be sure, we have inherited from the animals, our physical constitutions are what they are because God has so ordained them. According to Tennant, God planned that men should develop from the animals, and that we should have a physical nature largely continuous with theirs, with strong urges and impulses imbedded in our nature. Thus, this animal-like inheritance or product of the evolutionary scheme is not undesired, but is part of the ordained process.

Actually, it is not essential to Tennant's views concerning sin for him to make this emphasis about our physical relationship with the lower animals, because even though he firmly holds that God desired men to begin life with certain impulses and appetites, thus providing one element in the field of conflict necessary to the growth of character, whether or not our nature came about by

evolutionary development or not does not matter. The important point to notice in his thought is that our physical nature is what it is because God planned it that way. That He also planned it to be continuous with that of the animals is a belief of Tennant's, but one which whether true or not does not affect the validity of his view concerning the origin of sin.

Another objection which has been made to Tennant's theories is that he has unintentionally minimized and/or explained away the sinfulness of sin. Some mention was made of this at the close of Chapter II, and of Tennant's handling of this objection. That he has dealt with it fairly and adequately is difficult to deny, and impossible to deny if his conception of what actually constitutes sin is true. And it will be clear by now that if men are only sinful in respect to that for which they are accountable or responsible, then Tennant has not minimized sinfulness or explained it away.

Suffice it to add at this juncture that, in any case, he has not minimized the obvious sinfulness of much of the conduct of adults. Whether or not his views of either the definition of sin or the origin of sin are true, it cannot be said that he has minimized adult sin, though, to be sure, he has reduced the scope of sinfulness to accountability. In fact, his views scarcely touch this aspect of sin. Tennant's great contribution in this field has been in his thought concerning the conduct of infants. He has thrown a different light on this aspect of the question,

refusing to hold, from the point of view of psychology, that any infant sins or comes into the world sinning, or has a tendency to what is objectively regarded as wrong conduct that overwhelmingly outweighs a tendency to goodness. Infants, he holds, cannot sin, strictly speaking, until they become aware of what they are doing.[1] That a certain portion of their conduct is not perhaps angelic cannot at this stage, he maintains, be called sin. And in this sense alone, but only if his view of sin in general is regarded as incorrect, can he be said to minimize sin. As for adults he is quite certain that all, who have been observed, have come short of the best that they knew to do and were able to do, and consequently stand in need of redemption.

Certainly no person can feel himself to be a better man than he formerly was, merely because he accepts Tennant's views on sin, though he is entitled to realize under Tennant's view, which reduces the scope of sin but not the intensity of what is actually sinful, that God does not regard him as sinful beyond the bounds of that for which he is responsible. In the long run, this is all Tennant's theories on sin claim, or change in the traditional doctrine of sin: that man is sinful only in those respects for which he is accountable, and consequently, because the infant is for some time not accountable for anything, there

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[1] cf. Hobbes, Leviathan, Ch. XIII: "The desires, and other passions of man, are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions, that proceed from those passions, till they know a law that forbids them."

is no such entity as original sin. He believes that in this view nothing essential is lost to Christian doctrine; and that his view is in accordance with psychological and ethical knowledge, in contrast with other views of sin, is, he thinks, a gain to Christianity.

Tennant's work on the nature of sin can scarcely be criticized from the viewpoint of the method of empiricism which he faithfully employs. What John Oman has said about Tennant's philosophy in general, that "his reasoning from his own point of view is able and sound", may also be said in regard to his use of psychology, where "he has made himself a master",[1] and his treatment of sin. He has handled the facts of child psychology thoroughly and has found no possibility of holding to psychology and to a definition of sin or view of its origin other than the one which he has championed. And it is difficult to find any inconsistency in his work in this field especially since the conclusion is so simple and unambiguous.

However, though it is rather impossible to demur to his conclusions from his empirical standpoint, it may be possible to do so from another standpoint, for example, the a priori one, which allows for truths of revelation and discernment that may be above reason, in which case it would be possible to retain the traditional emphases concerning sin. If his view of sin is to be criticized or rejected, it must be done from some a priori point of view.

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[1]Journal of Theological Studies, XXI, p. 407.

If Tennant's definition of sin is correct, it has been stated, there can be no view of original sin, for if man is sinful only in regard to wrong conduct that he is responsible for, then he does not come into existence with original sin a constituent element of his nature. To adopt Tennant's definition of sin, and yet desire to retain a view of original sin would, then, be an inconsistent procedure.

And even if it could be demonstrated that children come into the world with a disproportionate tendency to badness (that in their infantile stage they do objectively bad as well as good things no one denies), it cannot be held, Tennant thinks, that they are responsible for their inherited nature. And certainly he is right from an empirical standpoint. But that children are in general more evil than good, though it has often been assumed, has as yet scarcely been demonstrated. That adults are great sinners is a fact, but one which in no way compels an inference of original sin. It has, of course, been brought out in the expository chapter how Tennant accounts for the universality of sin. That life has not been made easy for man and that he had to be made free and capable of sinning if he was ever to develop morality and character has, I think, been sufficiently indicated by Tennant in his theodicy, and consequently the universality of sinfulness needs no further explanation.

Again, however, it may be that there is in this case a truth above reason: for example, that his definition

of sin is correct, and at the same time that the doctrine of original sin is true. Or, it may be that though it is difficult to explain how man can be sinful in regard to conduct which is beyond his control and for which he is not responsible, he somehow nevertheless is.

At any rate, though it is not easy to find fault with his definition of sin, or with his rejection of original sin, on the level of empirical method and the attempt to explain things entirely in terms of human understanding, his views concerning the nature of sin have not been widely accepted in Christian theology.[1] Though the view of original guilt has lost favour in contemporary theology, the doctrine of original sin still predominantly obtains. Somehow, it is felt, man is not what God intended him to be, and with this recognition is usually associated a view of original sin as being the explanation of this obvious fact. Tennant himself, to be sure, recognizes a certain sense in which man is not doing what he knows he is able to do.

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[1]John Bennett in his Social Salvation (1935) endorsed Tennant's 'ethical' definition of sin, yet, later, in his Christian Realism (1941) adopted the more traditional 'theological' definition. This change he attributes to three reasons: (1) his growing desire to adhere more closely to the general tradition of the church, (2) a feeling that the ethical definition tends to fail to recognize sin, and (3) the recognition that Tennant's definition lends itself too easily to the view that there never really is a deliberate choice of evil. American theology in general has not adopted Tennant's views of sin, but rather may be said to be working along the lines of 'realism', i.e., the theological definition of sin with its paradox that the greater the sin, conceived in terms of its difference to the standard of righteousness, the less the sin, viewed from the standpoint of responsibility.

> "Man's condition denotes, on our theory of Sin, a fall from the divine intention; a parody of God's purpose in human history, though not a fall from an actual state of human righteousness".[1]

Thus, the difference between Tennant and the main stream of contemporary theology is at the point of his rejection of original sin and its presupposed state of original righteousness, as all are at agreement as to man's falling short of what he ought to be.

It is in this context, then, that Tennant affirms that it has not been sufficiently recognized that God may have wanted man to begin at the bottom of the ladder, so to speak, and thereafter to climb. The doctrine of original sin presupposes, of course, a view of original righteousness, because it is generally believed that God would not have created original sin or a bias toward evil. But aside from the difficulties of a view of original righteousness which he has pointed out, and its untenability from the empirical explanatory standpoint, the view of a fall from original righteousness has to overlook the possibility that God may have intended man to begin at the bottom and grow in character, thereby achieving morality, God's highest purpose for man.

It is, then, difficult to see the necessity for the view of a fall from original righteousness. The doctrine can only be justified if it is required to solve a fundamental problem in Christian theology, or if it stands in vital relationship to any indispensable Christian doctrine.

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[1] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 134.

The fact that man needs redemption would not be relevant here, Tennant points out emphatically, because redemption is required only because of man's sinfulness, not because people might be originally sinful. The existence alone of sin, aside from its origin, is the sufficient cause for redemption.

The important question, then, must be concerned with what is gained by holding to the view of original sin, and with what would be lost if the view were discarded. This is a question of a speculative type, of course, but is nevertheless a valid one, and the only way to approach the problem unless some flaw is exposed in Tennant's application of the empirical method to the problem of sin.

Further, to hold to original sin is only possible if one identifies sin with some conduct for which man is not responsible, or else if one makes God responsible for original sin. The word sin is usually used to include some conduct which is unavoidable, but it would seem better to reserve the term only for conduct for which man is responsible. The important thing is that it is not necessary to hold that man fell, for this is a purely speculative conception having no ground in experience, aside from its being contradictory to several sciences, and it is not a view necessary to account for the universality of sin, from the point of view of psychology. Nor does one honour God in making man, individually or collectively, responsible for a supposed event about which he knows nothing and

remembers nothing. The view of original sin certainly does not appreciate the conception that God intended man to grow in ethical perfection and to develop character, rather than be ready-made perfect, a finished product from the start.[1] And if God so willed man to so develop, from the ground up, then it seems fantastic to assume that He created man perfect, allowed him to fall, thereby placing the responsibility for sin entirely on man's shoulders, and then allowed him to grow in stature, thereby fulfilling His original purpose for man.

Though Tennant's conception of sin might at first sight seem to minimize the sinfulness of sin, it actually helps to strengthen the doctrine for the practical purposes of Christianity. One reason for the contemporary widespread disregard of the Church's teachings about sin is the exaggerated and unreal emphasis placed upon it. The usual ecclesiastical teaching has not found a place in the thought of most of the ordinary people of today partially because of its exaggerated nature. It is difficult for people to understand how they can be considered sinful for things which they know they are not responsible for, or how they can be considered partakers in original sin when they do not understand how such a thing could be, and it is especially mysterious to them how they can be considered to be deliberately rebelling against God especially while in an infantile stage. The Church has long

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[1] In The Master of Ballantrae, Stevenson has McKellar say, "For He who shall pass judgment on the records of our life is the same that formed us in frailty".

been in need of a simple, consistent, understandable theory of sin, and it would appear that Dr. Tennant has made this available. His theory is realistic, unexaggerated, and quite easy to understand, and at the same time it does not give people any cause for relaxing in the moral struggle or for regarding themselves as not so bad after all.

It would of course be possible, even after dissociating the term original sin from the ideas of original righteousness and a fall, to use it as a symbol of the observed sinfulness of man.

Tennant notices that the human mind has by and large clung tenaciously to the view of

> "an original state, if not of any thing like perfection, yet of unsullied goodness or conscious moral innocence; and it does so because it vaguely feels it derogatory to the Holiness of God to attribute any other kind of human nature to His direct causation";[1]

but he believes that God chose to shape man from humble and neutral origins, and created man with a capacity for both goodness and badness, without a pronounced tendency to either over the other. That he also believes that God has employed the evolutionary means for doing this is not important to his theory, because, in either case, he insists that God directly willed the physical nature of man. His theodicy of moral evil is that God's chief purpose for man is the growth of moral character, the world existing to this end; and, if this is true, then it would appear to make superfluous any view of original sin associated with

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[1] The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 142.

the conceptions of original goodness or a fall. Tennant believes that God created man in order to rise to the goal which He ordained, rather than to embrace the goal from the outset. That it is impossible even for God to create 'moral' personalities is one aspect of Tennant's theodicy, but it would have been enough to assert that God did not want to create perfection of humanity. If God chose to shape man from humble beginnings, then a view of original sin is not called for, for there would have been nothing to fall from.

To be sure, God created man capable of sinning, or else there could have been no possibility of morality. And that our moral task is difficult is, in one sense, God's responsibility; this being one reason, Tennant believes, why man is an object of compassion to God.[1]

> "He knoweth whereof we are made: and had we not been made imperfect, and liable -- not once for all, but constantly -- to sin, we had not been endowed with the prerogative of morality at all".[2]

But though God willed moral development, and therefore the possibility of sin, and though it is difficult for man not to fall short of perfection, Tennant makes it clear that in no single instance can men point to something actually sinful and excuse themselves for it. At no particular instance is it ever necessary for men to fail to do what they know they ought to, and therefore can, do.

Tennant recognizes that to many the very existence of sin at all has seemed a mystery, requiring an unusual

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[1] The Concept of Sin, p. 261.

[2] Ibid., p. 272.

explanation. Yet he wonders how God could ever have developed moral beings if he had not made men capable of sinning. And surely he is right, because it is impossible to dissociate these two ideas one from another. If men could not go wrong then they could not be good in any sense differing from the goodness of a clock. And, as Tennant believes that God desires a type of goodness for man different from mechanical and ready-made goodness, then He had to make men capable of sinning -- in which case, if there is a bias toward evil (the existence of which cannot, he holds, be substantiated by psychology), then God would be responsible for it.

His studies in the field of the problem of sin may, then, be briefly described here. The doctrine of original sin has been held by him to be untenable from an empirical standpoint, and unnecessary from an a priori point of view. It is untenable empirically (1) because ethics cannot sanction a view of conduct which identifies sin with a concept differing from responsibility; (2) because psychology is not able to recognize self-conscious volition in the first stage of an infant; (3) because it has scarcely been demonstrated that children are more evil than good; and (4) because no knowledge is available concerning an alleged fall. And it is an unnecessary view (1) because it is not required to explain the universality of sinfulness, a more natural explanation being available; and (2) because, whether true or not, it does not affect man's need for redemption.

Chapter V: Criticism of his Theodicy

Relation of his theodicy to his views on sin

Tennant's treatment of physical evil is independent of his investigations and conclusions concerning the nature of sin. As he does not in any way regard the incidence of physical evils as due to man's sinfulness, or as traceable even remotely to man's nature as a free and responsible creature, his views on theodicy in this regard do not presuppose his views on sin, and are independent of the validity or non-validity of them. In fact, scarcely any theologian today would ascribe physical evils to sinfulness. Some, of course, still regard them as in a sense a punishment for sin, but with the recognition that sin is its own punishment has also come a general repudiation of this conception. Tennant himself does not view physical evil as in any way a design on the part of God for punishment of foreseen sinfulness.

Tennant solves the problem of evil in much the same way for both moral and physical evils, i.e., he holds that if the reason for the existence of the world is the realization of moral values, then conflict and suffering are needed. In this he is no doubt correct, it being mainly at the point of his fitting of excess evils into the pattern of inexorable law that his theodicy is weak. But as for moral evil specifically, it was pointed out in the previous chapter that if his theodicy in this respect is correct, then it is somewhat superfluous to hold to a view

of original sin. And it may now be submitted, though Tennant himself does no more than barely imply it,[1] that if his view, that God through his plan for a moral world is responsible for the possibility of sin, is true, then it is not only difficult to hold to the doctrine of original sin, but also hard to deny the validity of his definition of sin.

Thus, though a theodicy such as his is not believed by him to proceed alone from his views on sin, or to depend upon or presuppose them, his theodicy being thereby tenable even on another view of sin and its origin, nevertheless his theodicy not only serves if true to reinforce, as was pointed out, his views on sin, but also, if God is responsible for the possibility of sin, we can scarcely hold to a definition of sin other than Tennant's. The converse of this is of course true, that if his definition of sin is correct, then man is responsible only for the actuality of sin, but definitely for that much of it, whereas it follows from Tennant's definition of sin that any view of original sin should make God responsible for that extent of the actuality of sin.

These above remarks are of course valid only within the context of an empirical approach to the definition of sin, but this much is certain, on the level of empirical explanation, that if one is going to have a theodicy which makes the possibility of sin due to God, and the actuality of it due to man (a necessary emphasis in a

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[1]Cf. quotation on p. 66.

theodicy of moral evil which sees the moral purpose for man to be the highest), then sin should not be defined except in terms of accountability. And though Tennant says that his theodicy does not proceed alone from his view of sin, (it being true for the most part that his treatment of the two are separate, except for the consideration advanced which was reached by reasoning backwards from the theodicy to sin), it would seem in respect to his treatment of moral evil that for his theodicy to be correct, then his definition of sin would have to be correct. For if man is sinful only in regard to what he is accountable for, then it is valid to say that whereas the responsibility for the possibility of sin rests with God, the responsibility for the actuality of it lies with man. But if we define sin any other way than by identification of it with accountability, then it is only right to say, on an empirical, non-paradoxical level, that in many cases of sinfulness God is not only responsible for the possibility of sin, but also for its actuality. Thus his definition of sin may after all be seen to be of direct importance to his theodicy.

The view of original sin and of a bias toward evil accuses men of many things for which we cannot be sure that they are responsible. If men are so characterized, then to some extent they are sinning because they cannot help it. And to whatever extent men sin because they cannot help it, then God is responsible not only for the possibility of such sin but also for its actuality.

Moral Evil

It has already been mentioned that Tennant handles the problem of evil in much the same way in both its moral and physical aspects. He holds that God desired a cosmos suitable for the rise and growth of moral character, and that such a cosmos necessarily includes opportunity for sinning, and contains suffering brought about by the regular course of Nature. Without the capacity for going wrong there could be no moral accomplishment, and without regularity of law there would not exist the rationality so essential to life and growth. Thus God had to create men capable of sinning, i.e. He had to make it difficult for men to achieve morality if morality were to mean anything, and He has to allow law to function independently of the desires and needs of individuals if rationality is to be maintained.

His theodicy in general may be said to be satisfactory, with the exception of his treatment of animal pain, and, more importantly, his handling of those physical evils with which we are unable to associate any purpose or reason, inasmuch as he makes these events due to the inevitable consequences of natural law, law in turn being due to the determinate nature of a God presupposed to be good. That order is needed if a cosmos is to be maintained, and that without the capacity for going wrong there could not be morality, will scarcely be gainsaid, though, as Christian theology has in general recognized the need of moral conflict and the importance of suffering.

Actually the problem of evil is more acute at the point of physical evil, for it is here that the greatest stumbling block to faith occurs. Many are not able to believe in a good God in face of terrible and impersonal physical evils. There are others, however, who see in moral evil, in man's sin and inhumanity to his fellows, an even greater reason for disbelief than the calamities of Nature, though most have come to believe that the great suffering which is occasioned by man's brutality is not the fault of God, but is due to man's misuse of freedom. And that God does not override our moral freedom is quite obvious in view of the extent to which men have misused it. But despite the fact that God has allowed contingency in the realm of human affairs, and has made it possible for us to sin, it nevertheless is not necessary for men to misuse their freedom to such a degree and to sin so intensely. That a certain degree of sin is necessary if men are to develop morality is hard to deny, but it does not follow that they must sin as much as they do, and it certainly is not essential to the rise and growth of morality that they should do so to such an extent. In any case, whether one sees in moral evil or in physical evil the greater barrier to belief in a good God and the greater trial to faith probably depends on the circumstances of the individual: for example, a person who was a refugee in Europe during the last war would probably be most impressed with man's brutality, whereas a person who lives in Great Britain or America during peace time might more likely see in certain tragic occurrences of a physical

nature the central aspect of the problem.

Some may think that it was somewhat unnecessary for God to have allowed the possibility of sinning, thinking that it would have served his purposes sufficiently only to have allowed physical evils, in which case Tennant would not be justified in making God responsible for the possibility of sin (and thereby in a sense for its actuality). And if God's ends could have been achieved by means of physical evils alone, then moral evils are superfluous, and Tennant is not justified in holding God responsible for the possibility of sin, and his views on sin are consequently undermined. And such is surely the case if it can be demonstrated that physical evils alone provide a sufficient framework for the accomplishment of the divine purpose, namely, the development of moral character. If God could have achieved his plan by means of physical evils alone, then, it may reasonably be asked, why does He allow man's inhumanity to man?

However, I do not think that it is possible to demonstrate that the occurrence of physical evils are sufficient in themselves to provide for the highest moral growth of man. For though physical evils may provide satisfactorily for the growth of character, of patience, courage, long-suffering, etc., moral evils are also needed because, in fact, the finest fruits of character are thereby made possible, namely, forgiveness and love. You cannot love cancer and you do not forgive earthquakes, but you do love and forgive persons who have sinfully wronged you or

themselves. And if this is true then moral evil, or sinfulness, is necessary to God's plan for the maximum development of moral character.

And therefore Tennant's treatment of theodicy in regard to moral evil is adequate and valid, and a rethinking of the traditional doctrines of sin and original sin is thereby strongly called for.

Physical Evil

Before proceeding to a consideration of the central issue involved in Tennant's theodicy of physical evil, some mention must be made of his treatment of the specific problem of animal pain. Very little is said by him at this point, and it appears that he has not sufficiently dealt with this question. For after all that has been said in recent works towards extenuation of this aspect of the problem of evil, for example, that the pain which animals experience is less intense than is ours, that they do not experience the higher levels of suffering such as spiritual bereavement and anguish, and that by and large animal life is happy, the question of animal pain is still of great importance.

And it becomes even more puzzling that there should be so much of such pain when one remembers that Tennant finds the chief excuse for pains and suffering in the view that moral development at its highest presupposes their existence. If this view in its broad outlines is valid on the human level, it nevertheless is difficult to understand how it can apply to pains on the animal level. It

may well be that men could not attain to the finest in moral personality without passing through the fires of suffering, but how can this solution be relevant to the animals? Thus, if Tennant's theodicy is correct for men it would seem to be irrelevant to the animals. A theistic philosophy which confronts the problem of evil with the view that suffering makes possible the highest degree of moral personality, must also be prepared to demonstrate the applicability of such a view to the problem of evil on the animal level, and to show in some sense what is not generally held, namely, that animals are capable of morality and personality. In one sense it is probably true that animal pain is the most puzzling aspect of the problem of evil, for it is especially difficult to see much purpose in their sufferings, and because we do not as yet know enough about the psychology of animals and about God's plan for them.

It has been intimated several times heretofore that Dr. Tennant's treatment of the problem of evil, though in general outstanding and worthy of careful consideration, breaks down at its crucial point, i.e. in his handling of those very physical evils which he rightly recognizes as constituting the crux of the problem, inasmuch as we are unable to discern any rhyme or reason in their distribution and appropriateness to particular circumstances.

There are two possible approaches from the Christian standpoint to the problem of these 'excess' evils, as they

may be called. One is to have faith that God is doing it all for our best even though we do not fully understand why. The other is to make an attempt to explain them completely in terms of human understanding. In the history of philosophy and theology many attempts have been made so to resolve the problem of evil but none have ever succeeded in finding their way to the level of the common people, even if any of them can be considered to have provided an adequate rational solution to the problem. Tennant's theodicy marks another splendid attempt, one couched in terms of natural law, evolution, and moral purpose, but it must be submitted, however, that he has not succeeded, where others have failed, in providing a rational solution to the problem of evil, and that plain ordinary faith in the goodness of God is still the only way to face these excess evils.

Tennant holds, of course, that the existence of both moral and physical evil may reasonably be accounted for if the raison d'être of the world is the development of moral personalities. He then rightly sees the greatest problem to exist in the chaotic distribution of many physical evils which occur out of proportion to any specific virtues or values needing to be developed. But with this recognition the problem of evil is thereby carried further than the general solution offered by the idea of the realization of moral values. To explain this aspect of physical evil, the crux of the problem, he then resorts

to the conception of the inevitableness of natural law, which exists by virtue of the determinate nature of God. And it is precisely this difficulty that is unsatisfactorily explained -- his classification of these 'excess' evils as inevitable though incidental by-products.

For if they are inevitable, and if God is not, as Tennant believes, subject to a prius of law, then they must be what they are because God so wanted them, in which case they ought not to be thought of as incidental by-products. And if God could not have had things another way, then it is incorrect to say that He is not subject to a prius of law. Then again, if He determined the law, or if the law is simply an aspect of His determinate nature, then we should change our conception of His nature to conform to our observation of these excess evils. If "evil is a logical necessity, ultimately determined by the determinate nature of God",[1] then we must alter our conception of God to fit with the presence of these unreasonable evils.

Christian theology can not be satisfied with a theodicy which at its crucial point is built upon inevitabilities and incidental by-products, not if God is good and if this is God's world. Things in general must be as they are because God has so willed them. Once God willed the general situation, then the results inevitably follow, but the present world can not be excused on the basis that it could not have been otherwise to a God who desired the

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[1]Art., "The Trial of Faith Involved in Theological Reconstruction", p. 705, Constructive Quarterly, VII.

realization of morality. If God was only able to create water that at once is characterized by a capacity to cleanse, quench thirst, drown and destroy, then He was subject to a prius of law. And to prefer to say that natural qualities co-exist with God rather than that He formed them from a realm of possibilities, though quite possibly valid, does not solve the problem, for we are then obliged to fashion our idea of God in accordance with our observation of evil.

If God is responsible for the general system being as it is, He is responsible for and would have foreseen that class of physical evils which Tennant will not call purposive, reasonable, or teleological. God must have known that many people would be affected unjustly and unreasonably when He set up his determinate system, and therefore, if the world expresses His nature, He must be teleologically willing excess evils (which Tennant does not allow), in which case we are not able to understand why, and must have faith; or else He is just allowing them to happen. And in this latter eventuality the problem of evil has obviously not been solved on the basis of the theistic conception of God. Or, again, God is in actuality subject to a prius of law. But it has just been noticed that He should not be regarded as being unable to achieve His high plan for the development of moral personalities except by using a certain general system which entails many incidental occurrences, inevitable yet not desired.

The weakness of this theodicy is well summed up in

C. D. Broad's searching question put to Tennant's view:

> "Must every possible system of things with fixed properties and subject to general laws involve so widespread, so intense, so unjustly distributed, so useless, and so morally detrimental suffering as there seems to be in the actual world?"[1]

Tennant of course hopes to evade the expected criticism that excess evils as part of God's world must in some sense be expressive of His nature, by holding that because they are only incidental by-products of the general plan indispensable to the highest of moral purposes, they do not express His nature.[2] He maintains that though they are logical consequences of the cosmos willed by a God of love who "at all costs seeks our highest good",[3] they do not bespeak His nature, and that though human afflictions are by-products of a best possible cosmos they "are not willed as such by God", for "God does not afflict willingly (i.e. from His heart) the children of men".[4]

Now if Dr. Tennant only wishes to refrain from attributing a special divine purpose to every particular evil, then His view has been formulated toward a good end, but it is not satisfactory to Christian theology to completely divorce the plans and purposes of God from that very class of evils which are confessed to provide the crux of the

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[1]Review of Philosophical Theology, in Mind, XXXIX, p. 483.
[2]Review of E. W. Barnes, Scientific Theory and Religion, in The Journal of Theological Studies, XXXIV, p. 397.
[3]Art., "The Problem of the Existence of Moral Evil", p. 520, Expository Times, XXX.
[4]Art., "The Problem of Suffering", Elements of Pain and Conflict in Human Life, p. 111.

problem of evil and the greatest obstacle to faith.

In effect, Tennant develops his theodicy in the following manner, though he does not explicitly so argue:

(1) God is good.
(2) The world was created by God.
(3) The world is of a certain description, containing 'excess' evils.
(4) Many things, because evil, do not express the Nature of God: they are incidental by-products.

This, however, is a desertion of the empirical method elsewhere consistently employed by him. In faithfulness to his method he should proceed in the following way:

(1) The world is of such and such a nature.
(2) It was created by God, or the world is what it is because God is what He is.
(3) Then, seeing what the world is, God, its creator, must accordingly be of a nature appropriate to it.[1]

And from this conclusion there would be these two

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[1]Cf. Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Part XI (Second edition, by N. K. Smith). If we already have the idea of "a very powerful, wise, and benevolent Deity", says Hume, then we will probably find a way to interpret the occurrences of this world to be consistent with His nature; but if we do not begin with such a conception -- that is to say, if we begin from scratch, i.e., empirically -- the world "can never afford us an inference concerning his existence" (p. 205.)

"In short, I repeat the question: Is the world considered in general, and as it appears to us in this life, different from what a man or such a limited being would, beforehand, expect from a very powerful, wise, and benevolent Deity? It must be strange prejudice to assert the contrary. And from thence I conclude, that, however consistent the world may be, allowing certain suppositions and conjectures, with the idea of such a Deity, it can never afford us an inference concerning his existence. The consistence is not absolutely denied, only the inference" (p. 205).

"I am sceptic enough to allow, that the bad appearances, notwithstanding all my reasonings, may be compatible with such attributes as you suppose: But surely they can never prove these attributes" (p. 211).

Hume is, of course, saying that the conception of a good God is not, and can not be, an empirical deliverance. Tennant would have been more consistent in his empiricism if he had adopted Hume's line of reasoning.

consequent possibilities: (1) God is not completely good, or (2) the world is not thoroughly well read by us; i.e., faith in God's purpose is needed.

The following order of thinking would be the most proper way, however, and proceeds from a premise which is primarily, though not entirely, an a priori one:

(1) God is good.
(2) The world does not appear to be completely reasonable, because of certain excess evils.
(3) Thus, faith that the world is under the complete control of a good God is needed, even though we do not see any reasonableness in some occurrences.

No thorough solution of the problem of evil in its most puzzling aspects has ever yet been worked out. Faith in the goodness of God is still the only way to confront those happenings in the world in which we are unable to trace the purposes of a good God; faith that He knows what He is doing, and that He is doing it in the long run for our best. And even if a satisfactory rational solution could be found on the basis of Christian theology it is doubtful if it would thereby alter the need for faith, for it would scarcely solve the problem on the practical, existential level. When people are up against it, so to speak, theoretical solutions are only of slight help. They must have faith that things in general are as they are because God wants them that way, and that His way is the best, even though they may not always be able to understand just how some events can be for the best. Hosea expressed it quite appropriately:

> "Let us return to the Lord, for He hath torn, and He will heal us -- He hath smitten, and He will bind us".

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